

**Atlanta  
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# IN THESE TIMES

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## Homeless



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## on the Range

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the Lone Star State

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# Semiconductor chips are down between the U.S. and Japan

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

The U.S. and Japan are now locked in their most serious dispute since the end of World War II. The immediate issue is whether the Japanese will open their markets to American producers of semiconductor chips, the insect-like creatures that make computers and videocassette recorders possible, but the long-range issue is whether both can prosper in an increasingly competitive world economy. In the '30s, these kinds of tensions led to world war. In the '90s, they could shatter a 40-year alliance and imperil both the American and Japanese economies.

Semiconductors became the focus of the dispute because they are so important to both nations' industrial futures. They are the oil of the 21st century, the control of which will determine a country's ability to compete on the world market. The U.S. invented the semiconductor chip and still leads the world market for advanced microprocessors—the chips that run computers—but the U.S. has fallen woefully behind Japan in low-cost memory chips.

American firms charge that the Japanese secured their edge in memory chips through illegal trade practices. In 1985 several members of the Semiconductor Industry Association filed complaints that Japanese firms were "dumping" their chips below cost on the American market in order to destroy any competitors. At the same time they were blocking American firms' access to the Japanese market, which is now the world's largest. The Commerce Department agreed, and last August it signed an agreement with the Japanese. According to the agree-

Kong. In addition, the American share of the Japanese market has actually dropped—from 8.5 to 8.4 percent—in the nine months since the agreement was signed.

In retaliation, the administration announced on March 7 that, barring new findings it would impose 100 percent tariffs on a range of Japanese imports on April 17. In order to protect American firms that use Japanese chips for their products, the tariff targets window air-conditioners, radio-tape players and computer disk drives produced by the offending chipmakers, but not the chips themselves.

Last year's total trade deficit with Japan was \$58.6 billion. The new tariffs would reduce Japanese sales in the U.S. by only \$300 million a year—the amount that American chipmakers estimate they lose from the Japanese failure to keep their promises. But this is the strongest action that an American administration has ever taken directly at Japanese goods and it sets an important precedent.

"We've spent years and years dealing with the Japanese by making threats with no real intention of carrying through on them," says Japan expert Robert Angel, a professor of political science at the University of South Carolina. "This is the first time we have made good on them."

**Closed Japanese market:** It appears that the Reagan administration acted partly under pressure from Congress, but also out of the realization that its own trade strategy was inadequate for dealing with the Japanese. The administration had assumed that by forcing up the value of the yen relative to the dollar it would allow American firms to undersell the Japanese. But in the last year the U.S.-Japanese trade deficit widened, as Japanese firms cut their prices and Japanese firms and trade officials continued to keep American non-agricultural goods out of the Japanese market.

One event appeared to have shaken the administration out of its free-trade torpor. At a Tokyo luncheon in February Makoto Kuroda, a vice minister of Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and MITI's chief trade negotiator, told visiting American trade officials that Japan would not buy \$20 million Cray supercomputers—the world's most powerful computers—even if they were cheaper and more powerful than Japanese computers. The classified report of the luncheon was an important factor in the Reagan administration's decision last month to veto Fujitsu's \$200-million bid to buy the Fairchild Semiconductor Co. and it contributed to the administration's resolve to erect tariffs against the chipmakers.

Japanese officials know that more is at stake than the chip trade. Although they have publicly treated the dispute as if it involved only the semiconductor trade, they have reportedly been reconsidering whether to purchase Cray supercomputers and whether to let American firms join in the production of a new fighter aircraft.

But Japanese officials may find it difficult to resolve the dispute. As Karel G. van Wolferen writes in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs*, in Japan there is a "careful balance between semi-autonomous groups that share power." There is no central state power that can get the large Japanese firms or the Japanese bureaucracy to do what it wishes. Thus, it appeared that NEC, Fujitsu and Hitachi simply decided to ignore last July's agreement with the U.S.

And Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, who has tried to increase the state's power, is presently distracted by a political crisis, the result of his attempt at tax reform that could lead to increased taxes after having promised in the last election not to raise taxes.

**Competing with Japan:** But it is also not clear what the Reagan administration wants from the Japanese. Semiconductor trade expert Michael Borrus of the Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy believes that unless the administration demands that the Japanese purchase set amounts of American chips, nothing will

really change. "If you say just open up your markets, you run into all sorts of difficulties specifying what that should mean," Borrus says. "We have to tie the Japanese government's hands."

But even if the administration secures this kind of agreement from the Japanese, the American semiconductor industry may continue to lose ground not only to the Japanese but also to the Koreans and Taiwanese. Japanese firms presently make memory chips better and cheaper than American firms do—the result not only of a superior approach to quality control, but also of a commitment by the government and the large Japanese conglomerates to undertake the necessary billion-dollar investments in plant and equipment. The Japanese made their most significant investments during the 1979-81 slowdown in the semiconductor industry.

By contrast, American firms are divided between the giants like AT&T and IBM that make their own chips but do not sell them and small and medium-sized firms like Intel and Advanced Micro Devices that do not have the resources or the guaranteed markets to make large investments during industry slowdowns. As Borrus and others argue, the government must help these firms with low-cost capital, and the firms themselves must develop some kind of cartel for research and development.

Intel and several other semiconductor firms have already proposed a consortium—dubbed "Sematech" for Semiconductor Manufacturing Technology—that would develop the prototype of a manufacturing process for new generations of ultra-high-density chips. The U.S. government's Defense Science Board endorsed this plan and proposed that the Pentagon contribute \$1 billion over five years and private industry contribute \$250 million over five years to ensure its success. But no money has yet been committed by either government or private industry, and the Justice Department would also have to exempt the plan from the antitrust laws. In addition, IBM appears to oppose any cartel that would go beyond product research and into manufacturing process.

Thus, to reverse the decline of the semiconductor industry, the Reagan administration faces several difficult choices in the months ahead. It must risk a serious spat with Japan—one that could embarrass and even discredit Reagan ally Nakasone—and it must break further with its own free-market philosophy.

## INSIDE STORY

ment, Japanese firms would stop selling their chips below cost both in the U.S. and in other countries, and the Japanese government would insure that the American market share went from 8.5 percent to "more than 20 percent" by 1991.

But according to the Commerce Department and independent consulting firms like Dataquest, the Japanese have not honored the agreement. While the Japanese chipmakers have stopped dumping their products on the U.S. market, they are still selling them at almost half of the U.S. market price in markets like Taiwan and Hong

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## Come all ye faithful!

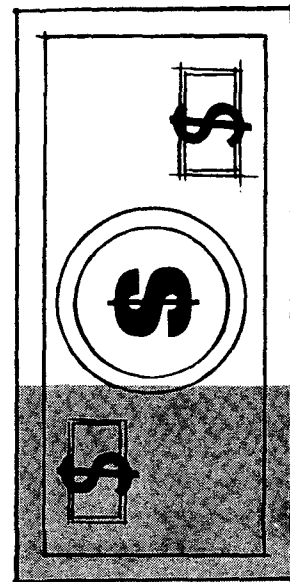
Oral Roberts raised his \$8 million and was saved from the devil, but in the last two weeks we've received only \$2,406. This gives us \$39,897 of our \$125,000 fund drive goal.

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Gen. John Singlaub, a key contragate figure, was a consultant for Overseas Press Service, which has been linked to the North supply network.

## Atlanta firm linked to contra network

By Jim Naureckas & Richard Ryan

ATLANTA

**I**N THESE TIMES HAS LEARNED THAT PART OF Lt. Col. Oliver North's contra supply network may have been discovered, then covered up, by Atlanta police in 1984. An inquiry that tied Overseas Press Service, an Atlanta-based news organization active in Central America, to illegal explosives was dropped at North's request, according to a source familiar with the aborted investigation by Atlanta's Fulton County Police.

The police linked Overseas Press to a ton of C-4 plastic explosives found in an Atlanta-area warehouse, according to the source. C-4

**One source says police in Atlanta linked illegal explosives to Overseas Press Service. But an investigation was allegedly dropped at Lt. Col. Oliver North's request.**

is a highly powerful military explosive that has been reportedly used in contra bombings.

But the investigation was dropped, the source said, because North personally called police officials to tell them to halt the investigation, saying that the C-4 was part of a federal operation.

Overseas Press, and individuals connected with it, have ties to Gen. John Singlaub, a prominent fund-raiser for the contras who has worked with North's network.

Fulton County Police officials said there was an investigation relating to Overseas Press in 1984, but said it was conducted by Chief of Detectives E.E. Nixon without authorization. They refused to elaborate beyond saying that the department had no evidence of illegal activities. When *In These Times* questioned Nixon about the investigation, he declined to discuss it, saying, "I've never bucked the CIA before." In a subsequent interview he denied having made the comment.

When asked about Nixon's investigation, police officials would not say whether it probed Overseas Press as a corporation or only some individuals connected with it. Although directors said Overseas Press disbanded in July 1984, at least one director, W. Dennis Suit, continues to use the name in his own news organization. Suit said that others connected with Overseas Press may have continued to use the name as well.

*In These Times* found no evidence linking any particular individuals to C-4 explosives.

Overseas Press Service was incorporated only two months earlier on May 31, 1984, in order to "engage in the profession of news and photography in both foreign and domestic news" and "to act as a guide for correspondents in different areas of the world," according to its articles of incorporation.

Suit, who described himself as a "combat cameraman," said that Overseas Press covered mainly wars. "We can get you into Ethiopia, we can get you into South Africa, we can get you into Afghanistan," he said. When interviewed, Suit had just returned from three weeks in Honduras with the contras.

Other directors of Overseas Press included Walter L. Gold, a Washington news

producer; Hugh J. Wall, an airplane broker who now works for a radio station; and Lenita Patterson, an accountant who is also listed as the incorporator. Except for Gold, all the directors live in the Atlanta area. Each denied knowing anything about a police investigation and said that Overseas Press was only a news-gathering organization.

**The Singlaub connection:** But each director acknowledged that Overseas Press had ties to Singlaub, a central character in

the contra supply network. He is listed as a consultant in the Overseas Press prospectus.

Singlaub is a 40-year veteran of covert operations who commanded the secret Special Operations Group during the Vietnam War. He was retired for insubordination in 1978 by President Jimmy Carter. He publicly raised funds for the contras in 1984 and early 1985, while government support was prohibited by the Boland Amendment. His Phoenix-based U.S. Council for World Freedom claims to have raised more than \$25 million for the contras since 1984.

A spokeswoman for Singlaub, Joyce Downey, acknowledged that he was a consultant "in the broadest sense" for Overseas Press Service: "He certainly knew Dennis [Suit] and wished him well and endorsed his news-gathering service as a good thing to do to get good stories." Singlaub's relationship with Suit, a director of Overseas Press, is long-standing: Singlaub's spokeswoman said that Suit and Singlaub had known each other "at least as far back as 1978—maybe even further."

Downey said that Singlaub had met Suit through Suit's father Hal, a respected Republican politician and Atlanta TV news personality. But Dennis Suit said he recalled meeting Singlaub through Mitch WerBell, the late paramilitary instructor. Suit's recollection was corroborated by his father, who said that his son already knew Singlaub when Hal Suit met Singlaub for the first time at a barbecue given by WerBell at "the Farm," WerBell's legendary training camp. Also attending the party were Dennis Suit and Larry Aumock.

Aumock is a former member of Special Forces (the "Green Berets") in Vietnam, where he said he served under Singlaub, whose Special Operations Group often used Green Berets for operations that required greater manpower than its own ranks could provide.

Aumock said he left the military in 1968, but he may have been involved in covert operations since then. According to Hal Suit, Aumock played an undercover role in the

*Continued on page 9*

## Two probes launched into Overseas Press Service

Investigations into Overseas Press by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Christie Institute are currently underway. The findings of the Fulton County police investigation, in the meantime, remain classified.

When first asked about the investigation, Chief of Detectives E.E. Nixon told *In These Times* that he knew "all about Overseas Press Service" and agreed to discuss it at a later time. But when contacted again, Nixon declined to talk. It was then that he said, "I've never bucked the CIA before."

Later Nixon said that his superiors had told him not to discuss the case. When asked to confirm this, Fulton County Assistant Chief of Police Louis Graham first denied ever hearing of Overseas Press, then acknowledged to *In These Times* that he had instructed Nixon not to talk about it.

Chief of Police Clinton Chafin would only say that his office had no evidence of any illegal activities. When asked if Overseas Press' activities would have

been illegal without federal sanction, he declined to comment. During one telephone conversation with *In These Times*, Chafin put Nixon on the line, and Nixon denied having made his earlier statements.

A source familiar with the Fulton County Police investigation suggested that one reason police officials remain so secretive, despite last year's exposure of Oliver North's contra network, is that the search that allegedly discovered the C-4 in the warehouse may have been performed without a warrant.

Fulton County police did not have to go far to investigate Overseas Press. The news service had an office in the same building, 100 Wendell Court in Atlanta, as the Fulton County Police Major Cases Division, where Nixon worked. Nixon said the Overseas Press office was "one thin wall away" from him. Overseas Press director Wall describes Nixon as a good friend, and director Patterson says that Nixon was a frequent visitor to their office.

—J.N. & R.R.



By Joel Bleifuss

## Republican fund-raising scam

The National Republican Congressional Committee worries that their fund-raising appeal has been sabotaged. On January 26 the committee sent out a "Congressional CABLE-GRAM" (a clever term for a presorted mass mailing) that said, "U.S. Postal Officials and I need your immediate help. Have reason to believe your 1987 Ronald Reagan congressional victory fund sponsorship card was lost or deliberately misplaced. On or about Nov. 21, 1986, I sent your new card to you along with urgent letter asking you to renew support for 1987... Post Office has begun official investigation... Official investigation underway because loss of cards has cost victory fund over one million dollars!" When asked how the investigation was going, Postal Service spokesman Louis Eberhardt told *In These Times* he has not heard of any such investigation. What apparently happened was that almost nobody sent in their sponsorship card in response to that Nov. 21, 1986, letter asking for money. At that point the National Republican Congressional Committee either: (a) actually thought their mail was being tampered with or (b) cooked up the scare story to feed right-wing paranoia and thereby gain money with the sympathy. According to *Who's Mailing What*, the newsletter of the Direct Marketing Archive in Stamford, Conn., since July 1986 Republican fund-raising committees have sent out a total of 29 different pleas for cash. The newsletter's report says all 29 appeals were "either signed by Reagan or talking about Reagan or asking for money for a Reagan victory fund." Add this to the fact that the "cable-gram" went out on Nov. 21, 1986—just as the Iran-contra scandal had hit the Reagan administration—and it just could be that money-giving Republicans began to wonder if their dollars were actually going to fight "Jim Wright" and the "ultra-liberals."

## A living wage from the "ultra-liberals"

"If people worked for a living wage, then a lot of problems would be solved.... You have to invest in human capital and in what is best for society as a whole," said Geri D. Palast, Service Employees International Union legislative director, in support of congressional attempts to increase the minimum wage. Though not providing a living wage, the Kennedy-Hawkins Minimum Wage Restoration Act of 1987 does do something. If passed, the minimum wage would be raised in 1988 to \$3.85 an hour, or \$8,008 a year. (The current minimum wage is \$3.35 an hour, or \$6,972 a year.) That 1988, \$8,008-per-year minimum wage would then be only \$566 below the 1985 poverty level for a family of three.

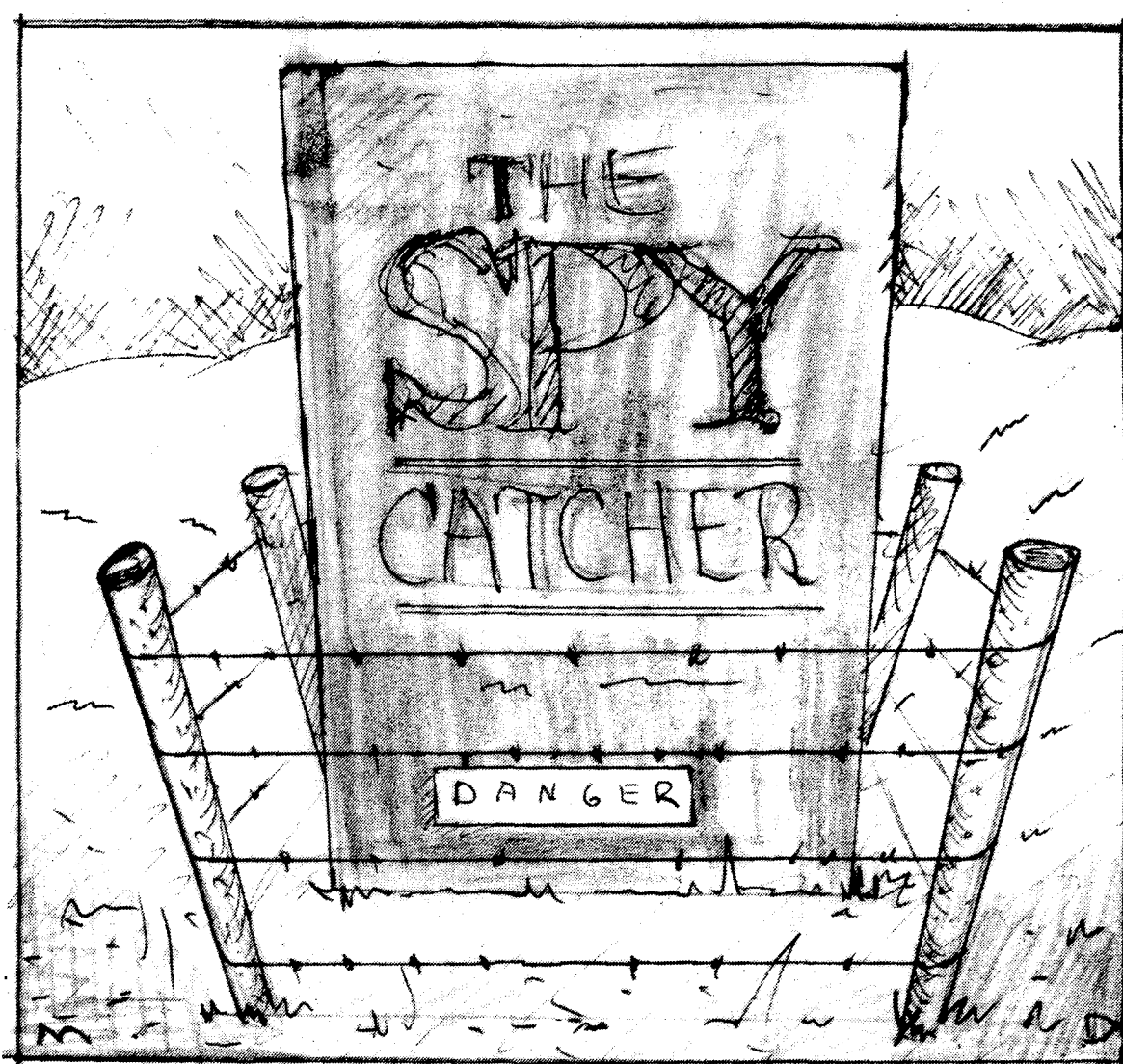
## Elliot Abrams sees red

The State Department's deputy director of intelligence and former ambassador to Costa Rica, Francis J. McNeil, recently charged Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliot Abrams with carrying out "an exercise in McCarthyism." According to *Mesoamerica*, a newsletter put out by the Institute for Central American Studies in San Jose, Costa Rica, McNeil said that Abrams had subjected him to a "months'-long investigation as a security risk" after he had filed intelligence reports that questioned the contras' effectiveness. McNeil wrote to Abrams, "I thought you should hear directly from me, as well as from elsewhere, that I am leaving the Foreign Service in response to your exercise in McCarthyism. Confusing candor with disloyalty is a disservice to American interests and tradition."

## As Conrail goes, so goes...

Stop the presses. The White House has resigned its government post. This shocking revelation surfaced last Tuesday in an exchange between *In These Times* assistant managing editor Miles Harvey and a White House Photo Office employee. A harried Harvey, searching in vain for a photograph of a U.S. ambassador, said, "I find it hard to believe that the government doesn't have a picture of one of its own officials." Retorted the photo office staffer: "This isn't the government. This is the White House." There have been rumors that White House stock is going public, but inside sources say it sold out long ago.

Miles DeCoster



## Margaret Thatcher and the MI5 spy scandal

While the Irangate scandal was shaking up the Reagan White House, the government of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has been experiencing its own embarrassing fiasco. Several weeks ago in Australia, New South Wales Supreme Court Judge Justice Powell ruled that a former member of MI5—Britain's counterpart of the CIA—should be allowed to publish memoirs that recount, in part, an MI5 campaign against the Labour Party.

For the last year and a half, Peter Wright, a former MI5 agent, has been trying to publish his book, *The Spy Catcher*. For the same amount of time the U.K. government has tried to suppress the book by maintaining that its revelations constitute a "threat to national security." In fact, MI5 is so secret that it does not officially exist.

The government's fear, according to Wright's lawyer, Malcolm Turnbull, is that the book criticizes both MI5 covert operations and the official secrecy that shrouds the organization and in so doing damages the reputations of both Thatcher and her administration.

What the government appears to be most concerned about is that *The Spy Catcher* details Wright's participation as one of 30 MI5 agents who, from 1974 through 1976, allegedly engaged in a massive phonetapping and burglarizing operation aimed at Prime Minister Harold Wilson's Labour government. Two Conservative Party members of Parliament were al-

legedly involved in this facet of the scandal. One of those is Winston Churchill, grandson of the former prime minister.

And the book recounts Wright's work tracking down Soviet counterespies in the '50s and '60s. In so doing Wright implicates Margaret Thatcher in covering up the guilt of a former Soviet agent who, according to Wright, headed MI5. According to *The Guardian* of London, Wright said Thatcher's November 1979 House of Commons statement downplaying the extent of Soviet infiltration into British intelligence was "gravely misleading" and "substantially false."

A few years after retiring to Australia in 1976, Wright began writing a paper criticizing MI5's furtive secrecy and lack of public accountability. Wright said he had planned to submit the paper to the Thatcher government, but that another MI5 veteran, Lord Nathaniel Rothschild, convinced him to tell his story to an author named Chapman Pincher.

Pincher's book, *Their Trade Is Treachery*, was published in 1981, apparently with government approval. However, when Wright decided to publish his own memoirs, the U.K. government immediately filed for a restraining injunction to stop publication.

From the beginning the MI5 scandal has displayed characteristics of a botched coverup.

There was an apparently inattentive administration official, Attorney General Sir Michael Havers, who was responsible for having authorized the publication of Pincher's book, although he may or may not have meant to, and now publicly regrets it.

The U.K.'s representative in the Australian court, Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong, fit the role of the uncooperative government witness. Throughout several days grilling on the witness stand he repeatedly pleaded ignorance and apparently gave "misleading" evidence. Judge Powell said in court that he was "troubled" that "Sir Robert is quite incapable of assisting the Court."

And it appears that the Thatcher government did what it could to stall the trial. It took two weeks for Thatcher to hand over the subpoenaed notes of the meeting at which her cabinet discussed the earlier authorization of Pincher's book. As reported by the *London Times*, an annoyed Judge Powell said he was feeling "a rising sense of frustration" over the "serpentine weavings of the government."

Although the Thatcher administration has maintained that the allegations in *The Spy Catcher* would "seriously threaten national security," the government has taken the argument that Wright, as a former member of MI5, was pledged to secrecy and cannot publish.

Judge Powell has disagreed with the government's contention that the only relevant issue was Wright's breach of contract. According to the *London Times*, Powell said, "If the truth of the matter is that the material reveals acts of treachery by the security service and others, and acts of an illegal nature, then much can be said that it is in the public interest to be made aware of such a state of affairs."

The British government has said it will appeal the court's decision.

—Maris Strautmanis



## INS Border Patrol nabs Salvadoran peace caravan

Twelve members of the Caravan for Peace and Justice in Central America were detained by the Buffalo-Sector Border Control on March 19 (see *In These Times*, April 1). The eight Salvadorans in the caravan that was touring the Northeastern U.S. now face deportation. Ironically, the Buffalo detentions served to highlight the issue of U.S.-Central American policy that the caravan sought to raise.

The incident began when New York State Trooper Jose Vazquez approached members of the caravan who had stopped at a rest area outside Buffalo and asked for identification. When several Salvadorans could not produce any, Vazquez said, "Maybe you're illegal aliens trying to cross the border at Canada."

"People told him they weren't going to Canada, they were going to New York City," Yanira, a caravan participant, told *In These Times*. (Members of the caravan asked that their last names not be

used.) Vazquez told them to move their cars to a corner of the lot, took away their car keys and told them not to move from their cars.

When the Border Patrol arrived they ordered the entire group, including the four who were legally in the U.S., to come to the Border Patrol office. According to Yanira, they said: "You have to know that you are not under arrest; you're going with us voluntarily. But we didn't have a choice."

The entire caravan spent all day and a good part of the evening in the Border Patrol offices. "They were trying to convince us, in a very sophisticated way, to sign the voluntary departure form," said Yanira. Added Sergio, another caravan member, "If we sign one of these papers we have to leave the country within 30 days. It would have been very bad."

Joseph Henning, deputy chief of the Buffalo-Sector Border Patrol, blamed the long stay in his offices on caravan members. "They dragged it out themselves," he told *In These Times*. "They wanted to talk to their attorney," Henning said. "There is nothing unusual in the Buffalo Border Patrol holding Salvadorans, except that these were

on a speaking tour. Usually we get families traveling to Canada."

According to Joseph Azar, chief counsel for all the detainees and executive director of CARECEN, the Central American Refugee Center, the next step is a hearing before an immigration judge where the eight Salvadorans will file for political asylum.

Azar and other lawyers are examining the possibility of filing separate charges on behalf of the four caravan members legally in the U.S. who were detained but not charged with any crime. He said, "People who committed no crime were arrested and held for 12 hours. All the while, Immigration was insisting to them that they were there voluntarily. It was an Orwellian situation."

Adelita Medina, coordinator of the Movement Support Network, a project of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York, said she suspects that the caravan's troubles were not coincidental. "The government is targeting groups opposed to the administration's policies in Central America," Medina said. "[The Buffalo detentions] fit into the pattern of break-ins and harassment." —Josh Weiss

## Baby M: judge OKs bill of sale

In the end, Judge Harvey Sorkow went further than William and Elizabeth Stern had dared hope or Mary Beth Whitehead had dared fear.

Last week, in a three-hour reading of the verdict, the judge in the two-month Baby M trial condemned the natural mother as "manipulative, impulsive and exploitive," incapable of telling the truth and with an unfortunate tendency to "impose herself" on her two older children. He described the Sterns, on the other hand, as "close, loving and very supportive," with a high regard for education and the ability to provide financially and psychologically for the child as she grows.

Then, in the *coup de grace*, the judge terminated Whitehead's parental rights and barred her from ever seeing her child again. After a ringing defense of surrogate motherhood, he summoned the Sterns to his chambers where Elizabeth Stern signed the necessary papers to formally adopt the 12-month-old infant as her own.

The Baby M case attracted extraordinary publicity not only because it was the first such agreement to be tested in court, but because it illustrated the human dimensions of the problem so dramatically.

William Stern, a 41-year-old biochemist whose parents were the sole members of their family to survive the Holocaust, said he desperately wanted a child to continue his family bloodline. His wife, a professor of pediatrics at the Albert Einstein school of medicine, suffered from mild multiple sclerosis

and feared that it could be aggravated if she became pregnant. She was skeptical when her husband suggested surrogacy, but subsequently came around.

If the Sterns were fairly typical of the people who seek out such services—eager for a child, willing to try something new and able to afford the \$25,000 cost—Mary Beth Whitehead also fit the profile of a typical surrogate mother. A high-school dropout with two children by the time she was 18, she is married to a garbage truck driver who earns \$30,000 a year. She and her husband once filed for bank-



ruptcy and were behind on their mortgage. There is no question that the \$10,000 surrogate parenting fee was badly needed.

Whitehead is also tall, slender and strikingly attractive, qualities that are relevant only because those are the things that well-to-do couples "shop" for in a surrogate mother. She is also white; if she weren't she would have been unmarketable.

Sorkow, meanwhile, was consistently biased toward the Sterns from the start. When Baby M was

just five weeks old, he awarded them temporary custody on the basis of what was little more than a bill of sale. He blocked Whitehead's attorneys when they tried to question Elizabeth Stern on her reasons for avoiding pregnancy, but raised no objection when the Sterns' attorney entered evidence concerning the Whiteheads' marital status, their rocky finances and police reports concerning her sister and two brothers.

While skeptical of Whitehead's expert witnesses, he gave considerable weight in his ruling to a child psychiatrist hired by the Sterns who characterized the mother's role as nothing more than a "surrogate uterus." He also said he was impressed by Marshall Schechter, the now-famous professor emeritus of child psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. It was Schechter who testified that Whitehead was a "narcissistic" personality because she dyed her hair and was unfit as a mother because she exclaimed "horray" when her daughter clapped her hands rather than the requisite "patty-cake."

Nonetheless, Whitehead's love for the infant she calls Sara is well established, as is her competence as a mother to her two older children. Termination of parental rights is an extreme step, usually taken only when a mother is abusive or neglectful. In New Jersey, moreover, fees for adoption are illegal and a woman giving her child up has until the baby is three months old to reconsider. Yet in the case of Baby M, the judge has severed the mother's ties solely on the basis of a pre-conception business agreement.

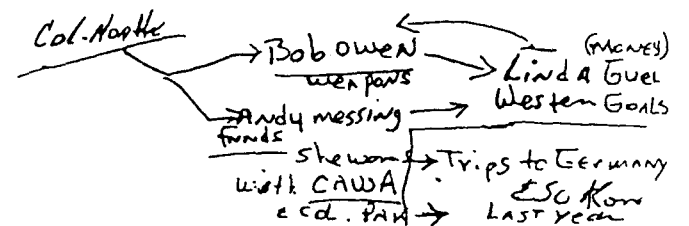
—Daniel Lazare

## Meese at Berkeley

In 1964 Edwin Meese III was an assistant district attorney in Berkeley, Calif., where he prosecuted University of California student demonstrators. His boss at that time was Alameda County District Attorney Lowell Jensen. During the summer of 1986 roles were reversed and Jensen was Meese's deputy attorney general. It was in that role that Jensen created the Alien Border Control Committee. The committee was charged with implementing the recommendations of Vice President George Bush's Task Force on Terrorism that called for the "control and removal of terrorist aliens" (see *In These Times*, March 25). Since then, the attorney general awarded Jensen a federal judgeship in San Francisco. Now, according to the *New York Times* (March 27), Meese is looking for a new director for the FBI and "the name most often mentioned at the Justice Department is Lowell Jensen." Jensen appears to be more moderate than his friend Meese. Several years ago Jensen was asked about the 1969 demonstrations at Berkeley and the resulting death during one of the People's Park battles of 25-year-old Berkeley resident James Rector. At the time Jensen described the death as "a tragedy," telling the *Washington Post*, "People's Park was not handled properly." During Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign, Meese was also queried about Rector's death. (He was killed by a deputy sheriff armed with a shotgun.) According to *Reagan's Ruling Class* by Ronald Brownstein and the *Washington Post*, Meese responded, "James Rector deserved to die."

## Mainline budgeting?

President Reagan is known for his curious ideas about budgeting federal programs. Is the latest one "pay as you go"? The February 1987 *Harper's* magazine "Index" notes these facts: "Value of the assets seized by the Drug Enforcement Administration in 1986: \$378,814,291. Budget of the Drug Enforcement Administration in 1986: \$377,775,000."



## The Moonie connection: another Tower omission

One of the documents the Tower Commission unearthed from Col. Oliver North's files is a scrawled diagram North drew in 1985 that charts overseas travel and the cash flow. The diagram reads: "Col. North," "Andy Messing, funds," "Bob Owens, weapons," "Linda Guel, money, Western Goals, she works with CAUSA & Col. Pak, Trips to Germany & So. Korea last year." When commenting on the diagram the Tower Commission said that Owen and Messing "met regularly" with Col. Oliver North, and said that Guel directs the Western Goals Foundation—a group that, among other things, has broken laws in its effort to compile a computerized list of "subversive" Americans (see *In These Times*, Jan. 14). But, strangely, the Commission failed to identify both "CAUSA" and "Col. Pak." In 1980 Col. Bo Hi Pak founded CAUSA, a worldwide anti-communist group, with Rev. Sun Myung Moon. CAUSA, Latin for "The Cause," is affiliated with and helps fund the World Anti-Communist League (WACL). Based in New York, CAUSA has branches in at least 21 countries in the Western Hemisphere and Europe, according to Michael McKale, who examines the group in *CLAC Report*, the magazine of Clergy and Laity Concerned. In his crusade against communism, Pak, who is CAUSA's director, has met with Gen. Pinochet of Chile and Gen. Stroessner of Paraguay. And CAUSA-USA, the U.S. arm of the organization, has been involved with the Western Goals Foundation, the National Center for Constitutional Studies, the Coalition for Religious Freedom, the Freeman Institute and the Conservative Alliance (CALL). Besides heading up CAUSA, Pak is also president of the Washington Times Company, publisher of Ronald Reagan's favorite Washington newspaper.



## Needed for the peace movement: a strategic defense against SDI

By David Moberg

CHICAGO

**N**EARLY FOUR YEARS AFTER PRESIDENT Reagan proposed his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), Star Wars has been shot down by so many scientific and technical criticisms—not to mention devastating strategic critiques—that it is amazing the idea is still taken seriously. It is like the madman in John Carpenter's *Halloween*, continuously resurrecting itself for future rampages. Star Wars retains a stable level of public support, and even if Congress trims back the president's requests for the program, SDI is not likely to die. This has led some arms critics to argue for new strategies by the now-frustrated peace movement.

The Reagan administration hopes to create enough of a foundation of SDI research, testing and even deployment to prevent even a Democrat in the White House in 1988 from derailing Star Wars. The administration now is asking for a 60 percent increase in SDI funding, claiming that so much progress has been made it wants to move to early deployment. And it has reinterpreted the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty so as to permit deployment and effectively kill the pact.

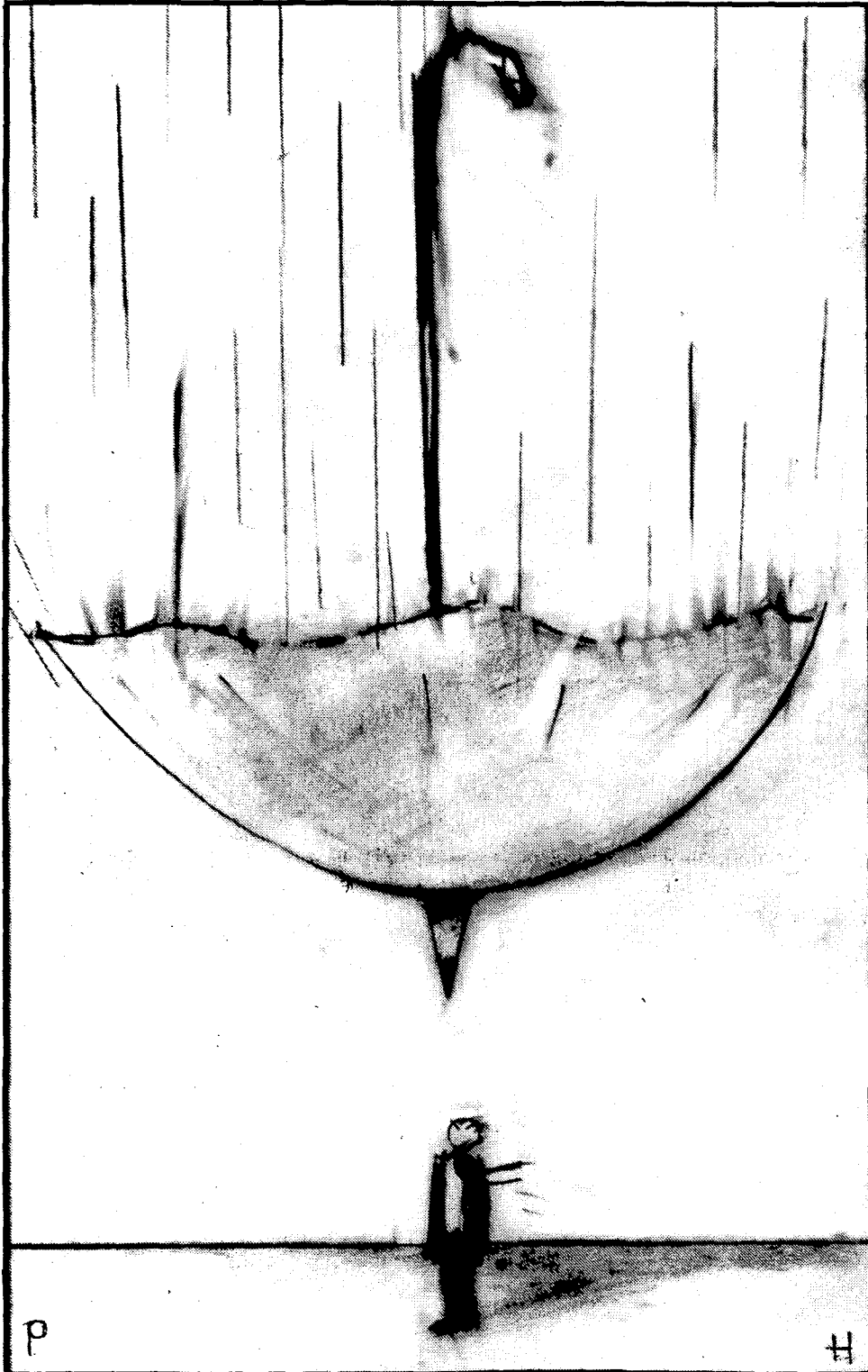
That campaign has been set back by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn's (D-GA) support for the original interpretation of the ABM treaty. But the administration is not giving up.

The Star Wars juggernaut does not rely on any particular rationale. Its strength lies in the variety of reasons for its support, often given without conviction or enthusiasm. That makes it especially invulnerable to rational criticism—a protean blob that absorbs argument without answering it.

Reagan's original SDI rationale—protecting the American people from nuclear war and rendering nuclear weapons obsolete—has given way to justifications of Star Wars as a way of protecting missiles, not people; or of enhancing deterrence through mutual assured destruction rather than replacing reliance on it; or of increasing Soviet uncertainty rather than providing mutual stability.

**SDI: fundamentally flawed:** Whatever the mission, technical and strategic objections are overwhelming, as a group of experts made clear at the annual meeting of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) last month in Chicago. Even if it worked, one critique goes, Star Wars would only protect against existing ballistic missiles, not against nuclear weapons, which could be delivered by cruise missiles, low-trajectory submarine-launched missiles or bombs "smuggled into the country wrapped in a bale of marijuana," in the telling example offered by retired Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Bowman, director of the precursor research to Star Wars.

The proposed three-layer defense has the best chance of success, if it can attack the missiles in their boost phase when it would be possible to hit, say, a thousand ICBMs



each carrying many warheads and decoys. After the boost phase—in which missiles are still being propelled into space—the task is complicated: there might be 10,000 warheads and 100,000 to a million decoys in a full-scale attack. The boost phase lasts at most five minutes. That makes it extremely difficult to make a decision to launch a defense and greatly increases the already scary chance of accidental nuclear war. Such a scenario could take major decisions out of human hands and turn them over to sensors and computers. But if the Soviets developed "fast-burn" boosters, even projected technology would make it virtually impossible to knock out the missiles before they spewed forth their warheads and thousands of decoys—leaving the Star Wars system the Herculean task of discriminating real targets and hitting them.

Much of the space-based weapons technology would be extremely vulnerable. Indeed, it is much easier and cheaper to over-

whelm or destroy any Star Wars system than to build one. Some scientists note that rocket-launched equivalents of buckets of sand or oil could foil delicate mirrors and electronic apparatus. Also, most of SDI's "defensive technology" could easily be used in anti-satellite warfare. Thus there would be a great temptation for either side to engage in pre-emptive anti-satellite attacks. Yet knocking out satellite "eyes and ears" could easily trigger nuclear war. Indeed, much of the Star Wars technology could be used offensively even against earth targets: attacking missile sites and cities by means of "smart rocks"—guided projectiles from space—that would impact meteors and lasers that could start firestorms.

**Unreliable glue:** Many SDI supporters—responding to charges that at best Star Wars would be a leaky umbrella, letting possibly hundreds of nuclear warheads hit the U.S.—argue that the system doesn't have to be perfect to be useful. (Of course, if Star Wars is really intended as a backup to a first strike,

which means it would only have to deal with Soviet retaliatory missiles, this argument gains strength.) However, the real issue is not perfection, but trustworthiness, argues David Parnas, professor of computing and information science at Queen's University in Ontario and a longtime U.S. Defense Department consultant who resigned from the SDI computing panel in 1985.

Despite all the problems with the technological hardware of Star Wars, Parnas argues that the critical flaw is in the computer software. "Software is always, invariably the unreliable glue in engineering systems," he said. For a variety of fundamental mathematical and technical reasons, there is no way to work out the bugs in software systems without extensive testing—and even then there is only a high probability, not certainty, that a system won't fail catastrophically.

But Star Wars must work the first time, and no simulations can possibly anticipate a nuclear war—with unknown decoys, with possible disruptions from attacks on the system or with interference by nuclear explo-

### STAR WARS

sions and their electromagnetic pulses. Parnas said he was told by a scientist involved in the testing of an earlier Safeguard ABM system that the noise from the missiles alone overloaded the sensor system.

Parnas has challenged colleagues to come up with an example of a program that worked the first time when given to someone else to use. So far no one has succeeded: indeed, the first moon landing—often cited as a metaphorical expression of how science can always succeed—had to be executed manually because two computers failed. It is also extremely easy to undermine a software system if the program is understood. And, Parnas asked, "what if one of the people working on this program was named Walker?" (a reference to the recent Walker family spy scandal). To compound the problem, nobody could ever be sure the program wasn't known.

"I'm not saying there is a fundamental law of computer science that SDI won't work the first time," Parnas said. "Ten thousand monkeys working for five years might write Shakespeare's works. Maybe 10,000 programmers working for five years could come up with a reliable program. But the monkeys' job is easier. You have validation technology. You know what they are supposed to produce." If the system can't be trusted, then military planners will have to work on worst-case assumptions—that SDI won't be there when needed. That means the arms race and threat of war are worsened, not lessened.

It is ultimately impossible to separate technical and strategic issues, argued Lt. Col. Bowman, now president of the Institute for Space and Security Studies and author of *Star Wars: Defense or Death Star?* The idea of the defensive shield is totally ridiculous, he said, but it is also irrelevant. "SDI is not about defense," he insisted. "It's a blatant attempt to regain military superiority through offensive weapons disguised as defense. The real purpose of Star Wars is to make nuclear weapons useful again."

**The public response:** Although some U.S. strategists undoubtedly think in those terms, not everyone supporting SDI does. Whether or not they think Star Wars will work as defense, military suppliers want contracts, politicians like money flowing into their con-



stituencies and scientists want federal research dollars. One scientist told Parnas he didn't believe SDI would work but still did Star Wars research "because I like hard problems, and this is a challenge." Parnas got out because he said it would be like responding to a presidential call to make faster-than-light missiles. "We could always be making progress, and the contract would never end," he said. But the premise would be a fraud.

Much of the public seems to engage in similar self-delusion. Public opinion surveys over the past three years have shown significant fluctuation in support for SDI, according to *Public Opinion* magazine, but there has been no definitive trend toward or away from Star Wars. With a few exceptions, 50 to 60 percent of people surveyed have favored "building a space-based defense system." Around 30 to 40 percent have opposed it most of the time. When questioners raise issues of either the cost of the system or its technical feasibility, support drops noticeably.

But a three-year study of U.S. opinion through carefully selected "focus groups" by the Public Agenda Foundation and the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University—scheduled for completion next year—indicates "skepticism combined with a large-scale acceptance of SDI—but unenthusiastically—as the next step in the arms race," according to the center's assistant to the directors Matthew Hirsch.

People in the focus groups reveal a profound ambivalence. There is a lack of enthusiasm, Hirsch says, because of "an overwhelming sense from the scientific community that this thing can't work." Yet people have a deep faith in technology, often pointing to the moon landing as an example of how the seemingly impossible can come true. "There's a hope," Hirsch says, "but it's hope that stems from gut fear of nuclear conflagration. It's not a hope that it will be done in the near term." Yet despite this fear of nuclear war, there is also a "fundamental, fatalistic outlook that we'll never get rid of [nuclear weapons] or even back away from the level of armaments we have now."

Although there is a "virtually universal acceptance of deterrence in its current form," people still hope to escape the threat of mutual destruction. "The impulse to support SDI and to get out of deterrence is the same impulse that supported the freeze movement," Hirsch said. "And of course the freeze movement crumbled under the brilliant formulation of SDI."

Several basic beliefs seem to underlie the support for Star Wars. First, Hirsch said, people fatalistically see SDI as simply the next step in an inevitable march of technology. Just as important, people in the survey's small-group discussions designed to reflect the broad population tend to believe that what's bad for the Soviets is good for the U.S. and vice versa. There's also the rationale that the Soviets are working on their own Star Wars, even though dominant expert opinion puts them far behind the U.S.—and conducting ABM research along different lines. Finally, the research shows many people believe Star Wars will generate "spin-offs" that will benefit other industries. Although others see Star Wars as a drain on the economy, researchers found that raising economic questions about Star Wars diverted people into discussions of the future of the U.S. economy and away from foreign and military policy.

Yet there may be a glimmer of hope in the discussions. Although there is deep distrust of the Soviets, people show little hostility,

Hirsch said. And, although the prospect of gaining a military advantage over the Soviets often elicits initial support, people frequently come around to seeing the concept as dangerous—like cornering an animal. They also wind up supporting cooperation with the Soviets on control of nuclear weapons and military conflict while continuing competition on other fronts.

**"Common security":** Increasingly, many leading strategists in the peace movement think tanks believe a new approach is needed. Instead of simply trying to educate people to the threat of nuclear war, instead of fighting new weapons systems one by one as they are proposed, these strategists argue that the arms race can be stopped only by striking at its political roots. They say that the peace movement must present a positive vision of "common security," a world in which both the Soviet Union and the U.S. work toward a common interest in national security without mutual assured destruc-

## The administration hopes to create such a base for SDI that it will survive even a Democratic president in 1988. Peace strategists want a new approach for battling Star Wars.

tion. The concept also entails a broader restructuring of conventional weapons for non-provocative defense.

"This is a critical time to figure out how and on what grounds to fight against a whole new era of the arms race, which is Star Wars," argued Pam Solo, a founder of the Nuclear Freeze movement and co-director of the Institute for Peace and International Security, a Cambridge-based disarmament policy research group. "The inclination is to do what we know how to do, which hasn't worked in the past, going after one weapons system after another without going after the political security system that gives rise to the arms race. The fight against Star Wars on technical grounds is a losing strategy. It's an important debate to have in elite circles, but it's not the strategy that's going to capture the attention of the American people, who I think support Star Wars in part because of the fear the movement created over the effects of nuclear war. The movement created the psychological conditions that made a new

technological fix like Star Wars desirable.

"We lost a major opportunity in 1982-83 to shift terms of debate by keeping our focus so narrowly on technical arms control and not speaking out with greater moral and political authority and vision about an alternative security system, saying that the real lesson of all our education on the effects of nuclear war is that security in the nuclear age has to come not from arms themselves but from new political relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, the superpowers and their blocs and superpowers and the Third World."

Reagan captured the high ground of opposition to deterrence and mutual destruction. His initial Star Wars speech, Solo said, "addressed people's fears, played into the cultural love affair we have with technology and captured the sentiment the movement itself had created and took it back into the arms race and the trap of arms control." The arms control "trap," as Solo explained it, leads to endless technical debates among experts and a loss of public involvement, ultimately making the peace movement a marginal influence on the institutionalized military spending "iron triangle" of the Pentagon, military contractors and key members of Congress.

**Help from the president:** Ironically, just as groups such as the Freeze and Physicians for Social Responsibility may have set up the psychological foundations for Star Wars, Reagan may have laid the foundation for the movement for alternative common security. "The American people know the arms race won't go away until we've reached some political arrangement with the Soviet Union," Solo argues. "Reagan himself mobilized people in this direction with his bellicose language." Also, Iranamok has opened the possibility to show how U.S. foreign policy "has been reduced to the art of transferring arms" and that militarizing the Third World has done nothing for U.S. security.

Yet the peace movement must define its own principles—essentially outline its own foreign policy—to provide a vision of how such alternative security could be established. That policy must include policies such as eliminating the NATO/Warsaw Pact confrontation in Europe; supporting human rights and self-determination in Central America, the Middle East, Afghanistan and elsewhere; and working for reduction and changes in conventional weaponry.

Staking out clear, broader political principles may also make it easier to avoid being red-baited, a paralyzing fear in much of the peace movement. But defining broader

"peace politics" may make it harder to reach agreement. It is notoriously easier to mobilize people *against* something than *for* an alternative. And despite much progress, not only among growing numbers of U.S. strategists but also more widely in Europe, the mechanisms of common security are not yet clearly spelled out.

**Future challenges:** "The basic problem we have is we're not seen as being serious about American national security," says Rob Leavitt, coordinator of the Alternative Defense Network at the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies. "The biggest task has to do with shifting the debate about what national security is. And talking about 'how we can be secure when people are poor and hungry' just doesn't make it. We have to think through for ourselves and make arguments to the public and policymakers that military force is increasingly irrelevant and counter-productive."

Frontal assault on nuclear weapons alone won't make much progress, he argues. There has to be a change in the amount, type and deployment of conventional weapons to reduce the fear of conventional war breaking out. And there must be proposals for reducing tensions and resolving conflicts, including agreements not to intervene in designated regions of the world. "Given that the head-on approach to Star Wars is problematic, given Star Wars is not going to work no matter how much money they put into it, the peace movement shouldn't be obsessed with it," Leavitt says. "What we can do is hold up our guideposts on what an alternative position on space would be, such as an international satellite monitoring agency or joint U.S.-Soviet satellite projects."

The "common security" approach accepts the continuing need for a military and for defensive weapons, even if they are fewer and different from those in today's arsenals, but it goes far beyond the neo-liberal critique of the U.S. military as gold-plated, over-technological and not designed for flexible, tactical fighting of a future war.

It will be difficult for many peace groups to make the switch to this new approach, but the opportunity to influence presidential politics next year should not be lost. Speaking to the PSR convention, which gave him its annual award for work to reduce the risk of nuclear war, economist John Kenneth Galbraith said, "In the past, PSR has been greatly successful in picturing—making vividly real—the human consequences of nuclear war. That task, I think, has been largely accomplished. The need now is political action, a need that should not, must not, be evaded." □

## Notes from the underground Soviet peace movement

As the U.S. affiliate of Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), Physicians for Social Responsibility has often been attacked by the right for its close work with the officially sanctioned Soviet Committee of Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. PSR and IPPNW doctors have been accused of ignoring human rights issues in the Soviet Union. They have often defended their narrow focus on nuclear war and dialogue with the official Soviet group as justified by the urgent need for progress by whatever means possible on stopping the nuclear threat.

At its annual meeting in Chicago last month PSR delegates heard from Dr. Bernard Lown, one of the U.S. founders of

IPPNW, and from a prominent Soviet physician, academician Simon Khechinachvili. But the group's governing body also privately heard from a quite different Soviet doctor, Vladimir Brodsky, a founder of the respected and frequently persecuted unofficial peace organization, the Moscow Trust Group. Brodsky was sentenced to three years for his political activity (although ostensibly it was for tearing two buttons from a Soviet policeman's coat, according to *In These Times* columnist Alex Amerisov). He gave the doctors a harrowing, clinical account of the brutal mistreatment and inadequate medical care in the three prisons where he was kept. And he was quite critical of the official Soviet physicians' peace committee, which he suggested was not particularly

active nor well-liked by Soviet doctors.

But Brodsky, who is critical of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the arms race, adamantly insisted that he did not consider himself "anti-Soviet," and he urged PSR and IPPNW to continue their relations with the official Soviet physicians committee, even to expand relations with government-authorized peace groups. At the same time he suggested that they try independently to reach grassroots Soviet physicians.

Brodsky was also deeply appreciative of work that IPPNW and PSR did on his behalf. "I was released only because of the efforts of physicians and the peace movement," he said to a group of PSR doctors. And as he left, Brodsky and Lown warmly embraced. —D.M.



By Salim Muwakkil

BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

**M**ENTION THIS CITY TO MOST PEOPLE and they tend to conjure images from the '60s. Alabama's largest city gained its reputation largely for the brutally racist antics of Eugene "Bull" Connor, its former public safety commissioner, and for the bombing of a black Baptist church that left four black girls dead. In black communities across the country, the town was renamed "Bombingham."

But Birmingham has had a black mayor since 1979, and he has been quietly transforming the city from a symbol of white racism to one of interracial unity. Mayor Richard Arrington Jr. would be the first to admit that the transformation is far from complete, but there's no doubt that "Bombingham's" Bull

## ALABAMA

Connor would never recognize the place.

And it's not just the complexion of the city's leadership that's changed. Birmingham's very identity has undergone a complete overhaul since the days of those gruesome, civil rights battles.

For example, Birmingham's economic well-being was once inextricably linked to the health of the steel industry. Today the city has a diversified range of economic resources; the area has become a center for education, finance, retailing, medicine, engineering and transportation. The largest employer is the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) rather than USX (formerly U.S. Steel).

This change has been so successful that *U.S. News & World Report* in April 1986 ranked Birmingham fourth on a list of cities with the best business conditions. The magazine cited economic diversification, a healthy service sector, proximity to the university and good transportation facilities as reasons for such a positive assessment. The city has made a "remarkable transition from dependence on steel making to a service economy," the weekly wrote.

Although there are pockets of opposition, most observers—black and white—credit Arrington for much of Birmingham's recent good fortune. "Mayor Richard Arrington...has been—and continues to be—a good mayor who has made major contributions to the improvement of this community," wrote the *Birmingham Post-Herald* in a recent editorial. Most of the city's business and cultural leaders concurred with that appraisal.

"Arrington is the most popular politician in the entire state, black or white," said Cynthia Pryor, a highly regarded observer who works as city hall reporter for the city's ABC affiliate, WBRC-TV. "He's just a smart man with very good ideas and once most white people realize this they tend to lose their racist aversion to black leadership," Pryor told *In These Times*.

But all is not perfect in this 116-year-old town of 282,000 in north central Alabama. Voting is still split along racial lines. The city's school system is 83 percent black and that number increases each year, the city council vote is often divided racially, whites continue to leave the city and inner-city blacks suffer inordinately from poverty and unemployment. In short, Birmingham has not escaped the economic and demographic ravages that other cities have suffered with the decline of this country's industrial sector.

**Mutual respect:** Arrington himself told reporters for the *Post-Herald* that more progress must be made in making Birmingham



Once dominated by the steel industry, Birmingham has diversified its economy under the leadership of Mayor Richard Arrington.

## Birmingham mayor reduces racial tensions

a color-blind city. "We are still a community that has a preoccupation with race. There may be some positive aspects with race, but

## BLACK MAYORS

I'm afraid there are more negative aspects to that preoccupation," he said.

The mayor's judicious phrasing is emblematic of his overall approach to governing, and it indicates how he's been able to function so effectively in a city with a history of such bitter racial antagonisms.

"I see my role as sort of a mediator, a facilitator," Arrington said. "I do think that being mayor in a city that tends to have some preoccupation with race and has some serious racial problems in its past, I have to be especially sensitive to try to create an atmosphere in which people can work together—in which there is mutual respect."

The 52-year-old Arrington has been characterized as a pragmatic administrator rather than an ideological politician or civil-rights reformer. His political profile is similar to that given Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson

Goode before the MOVE debacle exposed Goode's negatives (see *In These Times*, Dec. 17, 1986). Arrington's career in politics was actually an occupational detour.

While Birmingham was being wrenched by the struggles of the '60s, Arrington was preparing himself for the academic career he had long planned. One of two sharecroppers' sons, his scholastic abilities attracted early notice and he moved quickly through Alabama's school system, earning an A.B. in biology from Miles College, a small black institution in the Birmingham area. He received a master's degree in biology from the University of Detroit and in 1966 a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Oklahoma.

Returning to the Birmingham area, he began teaching at Miles and was later appointed academic dean of the school. He left that position to assume leadership of a consortium of Alabama's black colleges. During that time he also taught a biology course at UAB.

In 1971 a group of community leaders persuaded Arrington to run for city council. He won and became only the second black to be elected to the council, and the first to win without first being appointed. In 1968 a black attorney was appointed to the council to fill a vacancy and thus became the first black member. Arrington was elected the following year and was re-elected in 1975.

**Drafted for duty:** In 1978 a black female named Bonita Carter was shot and killed by a city police officer and, since police brutality was a long-standing complaint, the black community erupted in anger. "We were just fed up with the racism and brutality of this city's police department," Rev. Abraham Woods Jr. told *In These Times*. Woods is one of the city's most influential clergymen and head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) Birmingham chapter. He's been a prominent figure in the city's erstwhile racial battles. "I led the movement that galvanized the city's black community into action," Woods added, "and we focused our energies on the election of a black mayor. We chose Arrington for our standard-bearer and we drafted him right in my church."

Arrington was elected in 1979 with 51 percent of the vote. During his first term he assuaged the anxieties of many downtown interests that initially had feared he would disregard their counsel. "He used his first term to make friends and to demonstrate his mutuality of interests with those seeking to expand Birmingham's commercial reach," explained Pryor of WBRC-TV.

But while wheeling and dealing with the city's high-rollers, the mayor hadn't deserted his core constituency. He helped found an organization called the Jefferson County Citizens Coalition that stakes out issues and backs political candidates that support its stand on those positions. The coalition has been extremely successful in sifting the issues, and the candidates it backed swept the commission and legislative seats in Birmingham's mostly black districts.

In 1983 Arrington was re-elected with 65 percent of the vote. Since blacks make up about 60 percent of the city's population, it was clear the mayor had gained some white support. But despite Arrington's considerable success in shepherding the city through some fallow patches, support from the white population, centered mainly in eastern Birmingham, has come only grudgingly.

**Innovations:** "The mayor is an exceptional leader because his frame of reference is much broader than one would normally expect of a southern politician," said Madison Carter, a Birmingham native and official of the local Urban League. "He's not locked into traditional political patterns," Carter added, "and that enables him to be more innovative in his approach."

Arrington's readiness to innovate is nowhere more apparent than in his annexation program. Since January 1984 his administration has annexed a total of 39.1 square miles and increased the city's area by 34 percent. "Our objective is to annex land with significant economic development potential" and expand city limits, Arrington explained in his State of the City address earlier this year.

He noted that "we already have over 2,000 acres suitable for residential development, accommodating 6,200 dwelling units and generating more than a half billion dollars in construction activity. The development potential of 11,500 acres of commercial industrial acreage supports over \$4 billion of construction activity and 189,000 new permanent jobs."

But critics have charged that Arrington's annexation strategy is "imperialist" and expansionist. White city councilman Russell Yarbrough complained the city was scheming to gain control of county school systems and "eventually swallow them."

But Arrington's argument that properties annexed to the city will have greater access to the development assistance available only



through the city has blunted much of the criticism. The annexation policy is a novel and brilliant attempt to deal with one of the most vexing economic problems afflicting deteriorating urban centers: the exodus of capital to the surrounding suburbs.

Through this approach, Arrington has found a way to include Birmingham in on the suburban development boom now taking place in the area. The city benefits from the increases in tax revenues and other resources that accrue from commercial development, and the businesses gain assistance benefits as well as land that is reasonably priced. If Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Ind., had used Arrington's strategy, the astounding development that took place in the neighboring hamlet of Merrillville after he became mayor could have benefitted the city rather than help bankrupt it.

The Metro Area Express (MAX) is another city-suburb issue on which Arrington has taken a strong stand. Although most riders on this urban transit system are black residents of Birmingham, and although the city supplies 75 percent of the system's budget, suburban interests are attempting to wrest control by demanding increased representation on the nine-member board. What's more, they've threatened to pull out altogether and doom the system if Arrington refuses their demands. As *In These Times* went to press, the situation was at a stand-off.

This Bible-belt town recently hosted the opening of the largest thoroughbred racetrack in the Southeast, the Birmingham Turf Club. This huge, modernistic facility is a direct manifestation of the mayor's vision of the Birmingham area as a state-of-the-art center of recreation and commercial activity.

**Is anything wrong?:** Criticism of Ar-

rington is hard to find in this city's black community. He is widely liked and his appeal spans the class spectrum. Struggling entrepreneurs in the historic Fourth Avenue business district are as enthusiastic about him as are those corporate strivers in three-piece suits. In the city's premier nightclub, *The French Quarter*, Arrington's picture hangs near the cash register. Candidates backed by his political coalition were swept into the city council in 1985, shifting the balance 5-4 to his side.

"The mayor is almost unanimously popular among Birmingham's blacks," said Woods of the SCLC. "The only opposition you hear is the occasional complaint that he pays too much attention to those whites in eastern Birmingham." Woods noted that Arrington did get some heat for his support of Walter Mondale rather than Jesse Jackson during the 1984 presidential election, "but even that criticism was very short-lived." He explained his actions as the fulfillment of a political commitment he had made to Mondale.

Following the 1984 election, Arrington and a group of black politicians—many of whom were strong Jackson supporters—from across the state of Alabama formed an organization called the Alabama New South Coalition. It was formed to accommodate those young black political leaders who found increasingly little agreement with Joe Reed's Alabama Democratic Conference (ADC), the state's oldest and heretofore pre-eminent black political organization.

Arrington is charting new courses and succeeding in new ways. Mary Weidler of the Alabama chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said he has one of the most original political minds in the country and is "the best thing that has ever happened to that place once known as Bombingham." □

## Overseas

*Continued from page 3*

1980 attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran. "There were two Green Berets inside Tehran proper that were setting up everything," said Suit. "He was one of the two."

Aumock denied that he was involved in that operation, saying that he had been in Iran, but "a long, long time ago—while the shah was in power."

Aumock worked as Dennis Suit's sound technician on trips to Central America. Aumock said this was his only association with Overseas Press.

**Valuable contacts:** In early 1984, before the incorporation, Suit met with Oliver North in Washington, according to Lenita Patterson, Overseas Press' accountant. Suit was introduced to North by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), according to Hal Suit.

Dennis Suit denied meeting with North, although he said he has spoken to him by telephone and may have been introduced to North at a Washington bar.

Suit also met in early 1984 with Walter Gold, who became an Overseas Press director. That same year Gold helped the American Security Council (ASC) make *Crisis in the Americas*, a pro-contra documentary. He interviewed contras in Honduras, including contra commander Enrique Bermudez, according to an ASC spokesman. In 1983 the ASC, which lobbies for the contras, was named by the *Washington Post* as a conduit for private donations to the contras.

Gold, who now owns and manages the Washington News Network, a news production company, said that he knew both North and Singlaub, whom he termed a "great American." Gold accompanied Suit and Au-

mock on trips to Central America. Singlaub, Gold said, gave them valuable contacts in Central America.

The recently released Tower Commission Report documented that North worked closely with Singlaub's fund-raising operations. The report cited a 1985 memo from Singlaub to North, reporting that Singlaub was providing "former military or CIA personnel" to the FDN, a contra army, for use as "trainers."

Singlaub may have been providing the contras with more than trainers. C-4, the type of explosive allegedly discovered in Atlanta, was used by the paramilitary group Civilian Materiel Assistance (CMA) to help the FDN make bombs in the fall of 1984, according to a 1986 report by Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) on "private assistance" to the contras.

"CMA spokesmen have stated that they worked for, and at the direction of, and under contract to, Gen. John Singlaub" in many of their operations, the Kerry report said. It alleged that munitions illegally removed from National Guard armories, possibly including the C-4 used by CMA, were shipped to the contras in late 1984.

The Christic Institute, a public-interest law firm, linked Singlaub to another shipment of C-4. In a lawsuit brought by reporters Martha Honey and Tony Avirgan, the institute accused Singlaub of being part of a conspiracy to smuggle C-4 to Costa Rica for use in the May 1984 bombing of disaffected contra leader Eden Pastora. The attack killed eight people and wounded Avirgan, among others. This led Avirgan and Honey to sue members of the contra network.

There is no evidence that the C-4 used in Central America was the same C-4 allegedly found in the Atlanta area. □

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By James B. Goodno

MANILA

**A** COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN SIMILAR to the "low-intensity conflict" being fought in El Salvador is taking shape here with the support of the U.S. government. If it becomes fully operational, this campaign is sure to take many lives. But it is unlikely to bring about a just or lasting peace.

Comparisons between the Philippines of Corazon Aquino and the El Salvador of Napoleon Duarte are not new. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz has openly compared Philippine policies regarding left-wing insurgents to those of the U.S. and the government in El Salvador. Communist Party (CPP) and independent left intellectuals have long made the same comparison when discussing counterinsurgency, peace talks and revolutionary strategy.

Many Filipinos, however, including some left activists and thinkers, wanted to believe that Aquino could—or would—exploit her tremendous popular support and relative autonomy to launch an all-out peace initiative coupled with a serious campaign for justice. It has not happened.

**Words of war:** Aquino's verbal commitment to peaceful solutions and reconciliation ended with her March 22 speech before the graduating class of the elite Philippine Military Academy. During her address Aquino called for "honorable military victories, victories aimed straight at the core of the enemy."

Her harsh statements, however, did not signal a radical change in views or policy. Instead, Aquino's words confirmed a trend that was already developing.

Recent developments, such as the collapse of national peace talks in late January and the resumption of hostilities between the rebels and the government illustrate the nature of Aquino's evolving counterinsurgency program.

Civic action in the evolving plan has a dual function. Regional peace talks, which were announced after the collapse of national talks, and a new amnesty program—which includes incentives for rebel "returnees"—are aimed at dividing the revolutionary movement and at luring members of the New People's Army—the main rebel force—"down from the hills." Promises of reform and development target the movement's "mass base." Architects of these programs expect to woo supporters away from the rebel movement.

The military side of the government's plan includes regional and local offensives, the training of special counterinsurgency warfare units, improved military discipline and morale, psychological warfare and—when ever possible—the use of the often-feared Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) and other armed civilian anti-communist movements.

These counterinsurgency operations are boosted by Aquino's widespread popularity and by the popular belief that she supports change for the better. But popularity alone does not guarantee the government's success. In fact, there are significant, perhaps insurmountable, obstacles to the success of counterinsurgency. Indeed, if the government bases its approach to the revolutionary movement on counterinsurgency—as it seems to be doing—rather than on genuine commitment to radical social change, the

## Anti-rebel campaign echoes El Salvador's

prospects for a lasting peace will be as dim as they were during years of ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Counterinsurgency has never had a lasting impact here. Although counterinsurgency programs succeeded in putting down revolts at the turn of the century, in the '30s and again in the '50s, the

### PHILIPPINES

government's failure in each case to address the root causes of dissent led to the resumption of hostilities.

**An incapable army:** As it exists today, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is incapable of effective action. Troop morale is low, discipline is virtually nonexistent, corruption is widespread, loyalties are divided and combat efficiency is limited to a few commands. The military's image, which dramatically improved following last year's anti-Marcos revolt, is in decline. Recurring coup plots, political intrigues among the officer corps and—most significantly—three recent massacres resulting in at least 37 civilian deaths have blighted the service's image.

People who met here with Defense Secretary Rafael Ileta recently say he believes it will take at least two years to "clean up" and professionalize the armed forces. That might be too optimistic, as Ileta himself has apparently said to insiders at the Department of National Defense. Ileta is a retired general who is known as a "counterinsurgency expert." He believes the government should

**Popularity alone does not guarantee the government success. Without real reform, the prospects for lasting peace are dim.**

reduce its dependence on regular troops in favor of smaller, specially trained marine and Scout Ranger units.

Retired Navy Capt. Danilo Vizmanos, a former inspector general of the AFP, longtime foe of the deposed dictator and leading member of the leftist Party of the People (PnB), thinks that Ileta's efforts to revitalize the armed forces will come to naught so long as the military allows itself to be dominated by the U.S.

"The AFP has always been merely an extension of the U.S. Armed Forces," said the U.S.-educated Vizmanos. "The Pentagon has a very strong influence. Ninety percent—maybe more—of our weapons come from the U.S.... In that sense there is not much difference between here and El Salvador and other Third World countries." Vizmanos added, "There is a mercenary stigma attached to the AFP. We get our hardware, our training and education and our orientation from the U.S. That has to change."

American support for the AFP is increasing now with congressional opposition to the

Marcos regime no longer a factor. The AFP is expected to receive \$100 million in U.S. military sales credits alone for the purchase of weapons and equipment this year. The total amount of military aid will be even higher if the Reagan administration has its way. Additionally, Aquino's 1987 budget includes close to \$600 million for "defense."

Vizmanos believes that longstanding U.S. sponsorship and intervention led the armed forces to adopt and institutionalize its pro-U.S. orientation and its passionate anti-communism. But, he warned, the troops' morale will not be restored so long as they are forced to fight a no-win civil war.

**Enemy appraisals:** The ineffectiveness of the AFP can be gleaned from the cavalier attitude its sworn enemies take toward it. One person who is not impressed with the AFP's current fighting capabilities is Caroline Malay. Malay emerged from the underground as chief of staff of the National Democratic Front (NDF), the alliance of revolutionary organizations, during the recent negotiations with the government. Malay spoke with *In These Times* one month after returning to clandestine work.

"The AFP is badly demoralized," said Malay. "It has not been fighting well in spite of the high level of weaponry and equipment that they have been getting and using on the battlefield."

Despite an increasing number of armed clashes around the country since a rebel-government truce ended on February 7, the government is emphasizing the nonmilitary aspects of its counterinsurgency program. Much was made recently of the announcement of regional peace talks, amnesty and a land-reform program. But there is little to indicate that any of these programs will work. To date, no regional affiliates of the NDF have actually entered talks with the government. They seem to be holding to the national line that talks take place only on a national level. It is much too early to judge the impact of the amnesty program, but during the past year, there have been few surrenders.

The land reform program, announced with much fanfare, is in reality only a paper program. The basic land reform law is the same one signed by Marcos in 1972. The remainder of the Aquino program is a proposal that must either be included in an executive order signed before the congressional elections are held in May or subjected to congressional approval—and the congress is expected to be controlled by propertied interests.

James B. Goodno is *In These Times'* correspondent in the Philippines.

Corazon Aquino is now calling for "honorable military victories" against the rebels.





# A U.S. ambassador's crusade for the contras

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

**O**LIVER NORTH'S FRIEND AND FELLOW contra enthusiast Faith Ryan Whittlesey told Congress last month that as U.S. ambassador to Switzerland she had scored successes in her contacts with Swiss officials. Questioned by parliament, an embarrassed Swiss foreign ministry spokesman said he had no idea what successes Whittlesey could be talking about.

It was the State Department itself that blew the whistle on Whittlesey, who neglected traditional diplomacy in her zeal for the contra cause.

Whittlesey got in trouble over an \$80,000 privately raised expense account that she used for entertaining congenial American right-wingers at the U.S. Embassy in Bern. This is a trivial matter compared to the Iran-contra arms deals. And it also seems less serious than the fact that she turned the U.S. Embassy in Switzerland into a *de facto* branch office of the World Anti-Communist League and its proteges, the contras.

The Reagan administration first sent Whittlesey to Switzerland as ambassador in 1981, then brought her back to Washington in March 1983 to head the Office of Public Liaison, where she set up the "Outreach Working Group on Central America" to drum up support for the contras. Star performers at her propaganda briefings were her close friend Oliver North and retired Gen. John Singlaub, president of the World Anti-Communist League, the international umbrella organization of ultra-right intelligence agents and mercenaries. In May 1985 she was sent back to Bern as ambassador.

**Take your pick:** What factors motivated the Reagan administration to send one of its most fervent true believers to Switzerland? There are three possible answers to that question: (1) Switzerland handles U.S. affairs in Iran; (2) banks and CIA contra-servicing companies are located there; (3) solidly Western capitalist Switzerland suffers from an apparent contradiction—formal neutrality—which the anti-Communist crusaders want to get rid of by demanding full allegiance to American foreign policy.

Swiss observers of Whittlesey choose answer number three. They point out that by spearheading a right-wing attack on Swiss development aid to Nicaragua, Whittlesey in fact led an assault on one of the frail tokens by which Switzerland expresses its traditional policy of neutrality. In this she was aided by the Swiss far right—the school of thought that gave the U.S. Fred Ikle, the defense undersecretary who called on Gen. Singlaub to chair a 1984 panel on unconventional warfare in El Salvador.

If it hadn't been for the Eugene Hasenfus case and then the revelations of the Iran-contra arms sales, she might have had the success she claimed to U.S. Congress members. "We were worried last summer," recalls Socialist member of parliament Francoise Pitteloud. "It was serious that the Swiss government did not protest the murder of Leyvraz."

Ivan Claude Leyvraz, a 32-year-old Swiss housing construction engineer, was murdered by contra marauders in Nicaragua last

July 28, along with French radio technician Joel Fieux, 28, and German plumber Bernhard Kobersteyn, 30. Leyvraz was coordinating the construction of new peasant villages in the El Cua region on behalf of Swiss Workers Mutual Aid. Another young Swiss volunteer, Maurice Demierre, had already been murdered by contras on Feb. 16, 1986.

Last year's physical assault on European volunteer development workers was accompanied by a pro-contra propaganda campaign in Europe stressing the following points: development workers' lives are being put at risk by assigning them to "war zones"; they are bearing arms and are thus mercenaries in disguise; the Sandinista regime violates human rights. The thrust of these three arguments was that Switzerland and other European governments should withdraw sponsorship of development projects in Nicaragua.

The most vigorous pro-contra propagandists in Switzerland were Ambassador Whittlesey and right-wing Swiss parliamentarian Peter Sager, a veteran Cold Warrior whose "Swiss East Institute" specializes in scrutinizing the East bloc as the Enemy. "Dictatorships under Soviet influence are my specialty," declares Sager, who was happy to add Nicaragua to his list. Last May Roman Berger reported in the Zurich newspaper *Tages Anzeiger* that Sager was one of the Swiss contacts for a \$100,000 per month contra information campaign in Europe worked out at a Madrid meeting in February 1986.

Sager counterattacked with a pamphlet attacking "manipulation of information by pro-Sandinista propagandists in Switzerland." Meanwhile, Whittlesey stormed from one German Swiss editorial office to another, demanding more anti-Sandinista coverage. To help her out, she called in as her press attache Robert Reilly, a fellow New-Right activist with past services rendered to the Heritage Foundation and Baby Doc Duvalier of Haiti. Reilly's favorite stamping ground is the ultra-right Catholic "Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property" founded in Brazil in 1960 to provide divine inspiration to coup-prone military officers anxious to head off political or theological tendencies to favor poor people.

It is the "gnomes of Zurich" who interest "Cinderella" Whittlesey (that's who she feels like, she has said). She considers Zurich a financial and media center worthy of her attention. But she and Reilly have no time for French and Italian Swiss media. Editors of the *Berner Zeitung*, the *Basler Zeitung*, the *Tages Anzeiger*, the *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* and German Swiss TV have got to see more than they wanted of the American ambassador. The news director of German Swiss TV, Erich Gysling, openly protested Whittlesey's attempts to interfere with news coverage after she complained about the showing of a documentary on the sanctuary movement in the U.S.

**Elephant in a china shop:** Whittlesey told a group of Swiss parliamentarians critical of U.S. policy in Nicaragua that if they didn't know who their friends were, the U.S. would force them to get on the right side. One of them, Francoise Pitteloud, said Whittlesey "acted as if she were in a con-



Faith Ryan Whittlesey: some Swiss officials think she acts "as if she were in a conquered country."

quered country." Roman Berger likened her to an "elephant in a china shop." Niklaus Meienberg in the left-wing *WochenZeitung* said most of his colleagues will only talk about Whittlesey "off the record," as if they were "afraid of a little napalm."

Yet her total lack of diplomatic tact did not necessarily doom her bullying to failure, inasmuch as her pressure was not isolated but used and supported by the Swiss right, especially in Zurich. The biggest newspaper in Switzerland, the *Neue Zurcher Zeitung*, tends to go along with the Whittlesey line. Even if found excessive, the American positions tend to push the center of debate to the right.

Jeane Kirkpatrick's former press attache Louis Segesvary arrived in Zurich last August to take up his post as U.S. consul general equipped with a slide show of pictures he had taken sneaking around Swiss development projects in Nicaragua. He proceeded to show them to Swiss government officials, pointing to signs of self-defense against contra attacks as evidence that the development projects were really "military" installations. Thus the contra attacks, by forcing people to defend themselves, are supposed to deprive them of their legitimacy as civilians.

To incriminate Leyvraz, who was murdered while Segesvary was visiting Nicaragua, the new U.S. consul general reportedly showed Swiss officials the gun permit contra killers had taken from his body. This made a particularly bad impression on the Swiss, who saw it as confirmation of official American complicity in the murder of the young Swiss volunteer. Defending Segesvary, Whittlesey told *Die Weltwoche* that it was a "compliment" to Zurich for the U.S. to have posted such a talented diplomat there; Segesvary can actually speak German, she enthused.

Meanwhile, Peter Sager and the Association for Democratic Nicaragua, headed by Zurich businessman Alexander Eugster, have tried to drum up support for the contras and spread indignation over alleged "violation of human rights" by the Sandinistas. The con-

tras could count on the support of the Swiss branch of the World Anti-Communist League, headed by Geneva attorney Pierre Schifferli and parliamentarian Genevieve Aubry, a close friend of Gen. Singlaub, who visits her three or four times a year. The U.S. Embassy reportedly asked Aubry to compile a list of reliable, pro-American Swiss journalists.

Five Swiss conservative politicians went to Nicaragua searching for opponents of reforms in order to identify them as human-rights abuses. One of them, Jacques-Simon Eggly, said aid to Nicaragua was not "neutral," since it was not available to peasants opposed to the Sandinista regime.

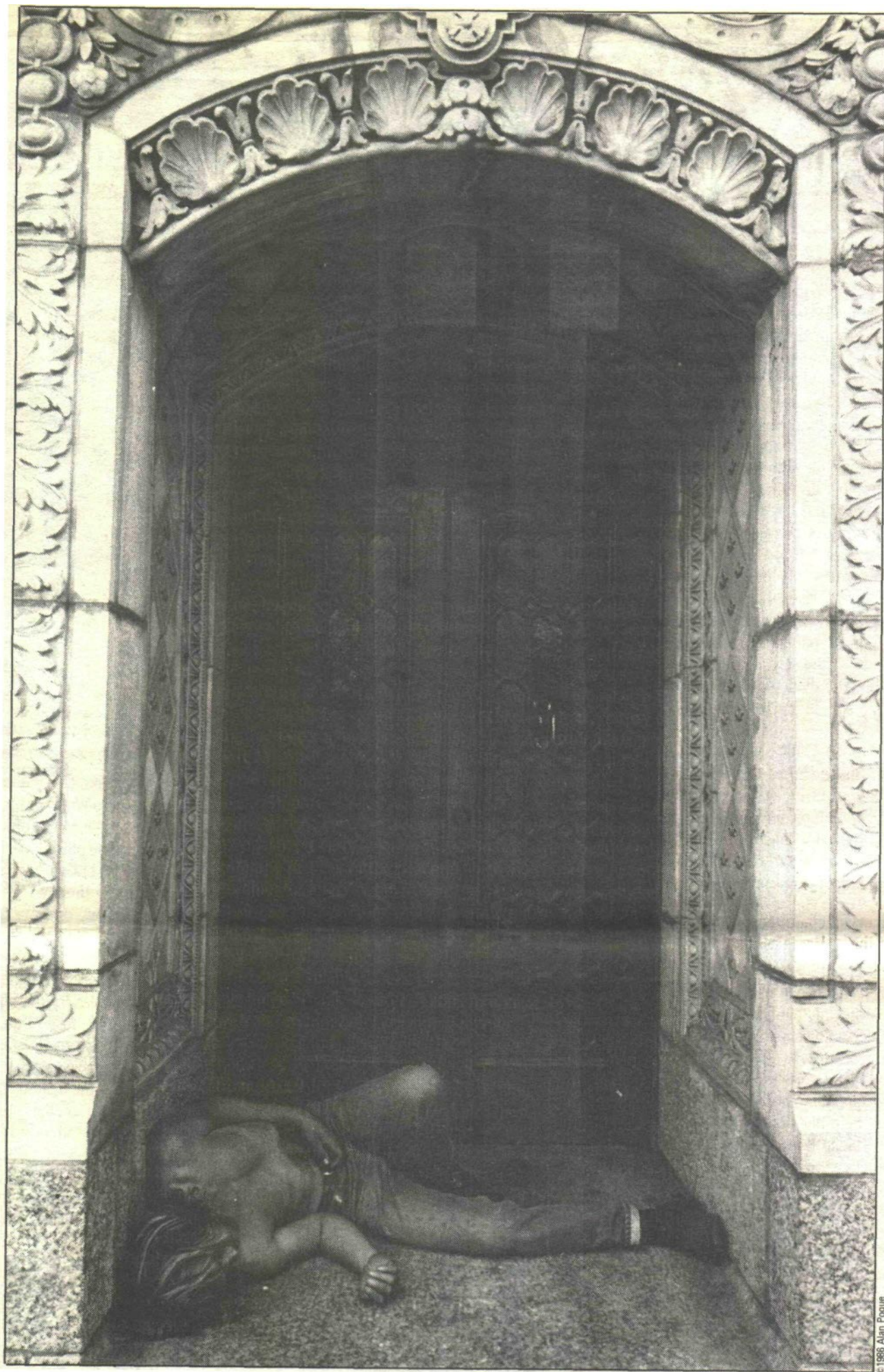
The target of these wealthy Swiss and American crusaders was Switzerland's piddling development aid to Nicaragua, which amounts to only seven million Swiss francs—which is not even equal to rich Switzerland's trade surplus of more than eight million Swiss francs with that poor Central American country. The development projects are supported by a strong current of public sympathy expressed in more than 30 Central America committees that raise funds and send volunteers.

But Swiss business refuses to give Nicaragua a break by, for instance, importing more Nicaraguan coffee—even when Nicaraguan coffee is cheaper than that of neighboring Guatemala and Honduras, with which Switzerland has a trade deficit thanks to coffee imports.

Swiss business, then, is not "neutral." But Swiss development aid is supposed to be. According to the 1976 law for development cooperation, the purpose is to help the poorest countries. Nicaragua certainly qualifies. Moreover, development aid specialists acknowledge that the agrarian reform in Nicaragua created the social conditions for aid to be used effectively—in contrast to some other poor countries where traditional social structures block rural development.

For the time being, Whittlesey's exaggerations and the Iran-contra arms scandal have saved the aid projects. But the political battle is not over. □





By Louis Dubose

#### HOUSTON

IN THE CHAPEL OF DOWNTOWN HOUSTON'S Star of Hope Mission sits a Saturday night congregation that is a cross-section of this city's hardcore homeless. Tired old men are here in mix-and-match clothing from the mission closet. While the physically disabled set their sights on lower bunks, the mentally disabled engage in long conversations with no one in particular.

Here, too, are groups of lean young men only a few days out of the Texas Department of Corrections maximum security facility at Huntsville as well as a handful of Mexicans clustered together in the back corner. A few men in their 30s—new to the streets and ill at ease—talk to no one. All need a meal and a place to sleep.

Everyone stands when an old lay-preacher

asks, "Who loves the Lord?" But most are soup-kitchen Christians. A hard-driving rain and low temperatures forced them into the optional three-hour (Spanish then English) chapel service. After a closing hymn, those fortunate few with regular beds upstairs leave the chapel.

The mission director reads from his list of randomly ordered numbers, and those remaining show their numbered bed-tickets and file out toward the 500-bed c-dorm. It's a place to sleep until breakfast call at 4:30 a.m. In the huge converted warehouse the roof leaks and it's cold. Every man sleeps fully dressed.

All of this, three meals and a bunk—of-fered by what is arguably the most generous men's shelter in the state—is provided with-out the expenditure of a single tax dollar. In

Texas the homeless live off the kindness of strangers, not taxpayers.

**A Houston tradition:** Houston's city government has steadfastly refused to commit any city tax dollars to assist its homeless population that numbers 25,000, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless. Even in the best of times, city funding for services for the homeless would be unlikely.

Richard Murray, a pollster and University of Houston political scientist, attributes the lack of government involvement to the city's "conservative, individualistic culture." Murray describes local government as a hand-maiden of the city's business community.

"The tradition is that the city doesn't get involved in spending money on services unless it can show a connection between those services and economic growth," he says.

And Houston, a city with an economy slightly more diverse than Saudi Arabia's, is in the fourth year of a deep oilfield recession. Mayor Kathy Whitmire, preoccupied with a fiscal crisis, is in no position to help. A spokeswoman for the mayor's office describes Whitmire as concerned and lending her office to the cause of the homeless while working to coordinate volunteer efforts.

One executive department is working on an urban homesteading effort involving 10 foreclosed houses and the administration of a \$74,000 emergency federal grant to aid the homeless, and the city has committed \$400,000 in federal money to continue the program next year. In addition the city council voted on March 31 to accept an additional \$74,000 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant, to which it plans to add \$326,000 in community development block grant funds.

But it is unlikely that any help will be forthcoming from a state legislature that faces not only a \$5 billion shortfall but motions to draw up a constitutional amendment barring corporate and individual income taxes. Three months into a five-month session, it appears that legislators will make deeper cuts in an already anemic social services budget. Texas ranks 47th in per-capita taxation, and under newly elected Republican Gov. Bill Clements is positioned to nudge Mississippi out of last place in spending on social services.

**Nowhere to go:** Thirty-five-year-old Linda O'Neal followed what has become a common avenue to homelessness in a city suffering from a protracted recession and a social services crisis. A year ago she lived in an apartment in a working-class black neighborhood close to the University of Houston. Suddenly her husband, a chronically unemployed day-laborer, abandoned her and their three children. Evicted on Good Friday, the O'Neals were accepted at the Star of Hope Women's Mission on Easter Sunday. The 250-bed, non-denominational Christian shelter was the first home for Tyrone O'Neal, who was born on July 8.

For almost one year the O'Neal's have all shared a 10-by-6 bedroom. Particle-board partitions provide some privacy from neighbors living in the converted warehouse in the city's decaying Near North Side. The only public assistance for which the O'Neals are eligible is Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payments that, based on the state's average monthly grant, will provide her with \$57 per child. (Texas ranks 46th nationally in AFDC, maintaining a slight lead over Mississippi. The average monthly AFDC payment nationally is \$111 per child.)

O'Neal applied for food stamps but was refused because her meals are provided by the shelter. "If I get out on my own and up on my feet, I'll need to have those food stamps," O'Neal said.

Her children's birth certificates were lost when she was evicted and she only recently recovered them and applied for AFDC. Yet it remains unlikely that any public assistance package she is able to piece together will be sufficient for her family. So eight-year-old Cheryl O'Neal will complete a third semester at nearby Robert E. Lee Elementary School, and Linda O'Neal anticipates an indefinite stay at the shelter that last year provided 74,000 individual nights' lodging for homeless families.

**Charity only:** Not even the unprecedented boom in social service agencies underwrit-



# HOMELESS ON THE RANGE

ten by the city's religious community has kept pace with demand for services that in other states are provided by government. Peg Dudar, who directs the Westheimer Social Ministries, last year dispensed \$90,000 in direct aid to clients within a five-mile area in southwest Houston. Dudar, who saw her agency's budget increase from \$55,000 in 1985 to \$90,000 in 1986, will not speculate on the current budget. "But requests for services," she said, "are very, very high."

Dudar is concerned about the increasing numbers of families condemned to live a prolonged marginal existence. "Families are forced to use emergency housing as a home," Dudar said. "Once they're out on the street, they can't put together enough money to get back into an apartment." Qualified applicants for subsidized public housing in Houston often wait four to five years for an apartment. So Westheimer Ministries provide advance rent and deposits required by private apartment owners. Another service they provide is a moving van and storage allowance with which evictees can recover and store their belongings before landlords dispose of them.

Some of the new homeless are fleeing Houston. A new service offered by Houston Travelers Aid, which serves 12,000 clients per month, is assisting families leaving the city. "It's not something that we advertise," said Virginia Cuvillier, Travelers Aid executive director. "But if someone has work elsewhere and doesn't have the means to get there, we will help."

Though some of the homeless population is leaving the city, Houston continues to attract displaced people from deep East Texas, where the collapse of the triad of farming, oil and timber has resulted in a regional depression. Joanne Ford of Spirit of Sharing, located in Liberty, 50 miles east of Houston, has provided some short-term aid to transients. But most of them, she said, do not stay because of the critical shortage of social services in rural or semi-rural areas.

"There's nothing for them here, no jobs, no help, so most of them go on to the city. Some camp in cars or vans or shacks, along the river or in the woods. But usually they move on," Ford said.

According to Ford, most are recently laid-off and evicted. Regional private relief agencies like hers are becoming more common in East Texas. Yet most are only food-banks

In the state of Texas,  
the homeless live off the  
kindness of strangers,  
not taxpayers.

that provide restaurant surplus food and donated canned goods. And often these agencies try to limit their services to residents of the county that they serve.

Roman Martinez, the state representative whose district includes downtown Houston and all of the city's major shelters, concedes that charitable organizations will continue as the main providers of food and shelter for the city's homeless. "I would really like to see the state get involved in that issue. Not just because it's my district, but because the situation is really bad for so many people. And our efforts to deal with the problem are now more difficult because of our Republican governor. Even before he was elected, Clements said that one of the first things that he would cut is health care for the indigents."

Martinez suggested that the most the current legislative session can hope to achieve for the state's homeless is to set up a referral and advertising network that would make services provided by charities and state agencies more accessible.

**Dallas, too:** In Dallas, a city of one million, 42,960 forced-entry eviction suits were executed by justices of the peace in 1985. According to John Fullenwinder, the Dallas chairman of the National Coalition for the Homeless, that works out to 165 per working day. Fullenwinder predicts that the 1986 figure, when available, will be closer to 46,000 evictions: "That's 46,000 evictions in a city with an inventory of 250,000 rental units."

According to Fullenwinder, the number of homeless in Dallas is growing. "It ranges from 14,000 to 15,000," Fullenwinder said. When the temperature dropped this past winter, the new homeless in Dallas scrambled to compete with 4,000 veteran street people living downtown for 1,500 available shelter beds. Many were left to sleep in cars, on the streets or in abandoned buildings.

Some 30 social service charities and the United Way are about all that stand between Dallas' homeless and starvation. In the winter of 1986, the National Coalition for the Homeless—a nonprofit advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., with a network of offices in 40 cities—included Dallas in its survey of 15 major cities. The coalition found that only Houston and Miami, where no local monies are spent, provide less than Dallas, where the city council in 1986 approved \$79,000 for aid to the homeless.

The Dallas mayor's Special Committee on the Homeless recommended last year that city government dedicate more than \$3 million in assistance to the homeless. The proposed \$3 million package included \$2 million in capital bond financing to build a downtown family shelter. The municipal shelter was the only major item deleted from a successful \$36 million bond issue that included \$11 million for a municipal zoo.

"In Dallas, a zoo is considered to be an appropriate public investment," said Fullenwinder. "But public housing in Dallas is not an appropriate public investment. Many here are convinced that donated canned goods are the solution to the problems of the home-

less."

The Dallas Housing Authority maintains 7,400 units of public housing, yet many of them are substandard and some are boarded up. Since the '70s the agency has systematically reduced its inventory and as recently as 1984 demolished 367-unit Washington Place. While the residential real estate market remains glutted, a mayor's Commission on Housing has discovered a shortage of 45,000 units of affordable housing for low-income families. The acute shortage of low-income housing has forced more families onto the streets.

At the city's Salvation Army shelter more than 650 families were provided lodging in 1986. Alice Ruff of Ruff Ministries describes demand for the 150 beds in the organization's family shelter as "constant and more than we can handle." Families stay in the Ruff Ministry house for an average of three to four months. "If there's a husband," Ruff said, "in that time he can usually find work and save enough money for the deposit and advance rent on an apartment. When it's just a mother and children, it's more difficult."

Ruff, like other social service providers in Dallas, voiced her concern about the increasing number of families on the streets and the increasing number of children among the homeless. Yet it is unlikely that any help will come from local government.

## Defending the inalienable rights of the poor

Even in the twilight of the Age of Reagan, it is not yet fashionable to speak of "inalienable rights of the poor." Yet this is the very language with which Dr. David Snow frames his discussion of homelessness in this country. Snow, a professor of sociology at the University of Texas, has made homelessness an academic subspecialty. In doing so, he has become an advocate of rights of the homeless and a critic of public policy that has put so many people out on the streets.

The inalienable rights for which Snow argues are shelter, clothing, food and a place to take care of private biological needs. "You don't need task forces and you don't have to spend huge amounts of money to provide for the immediate needs of the homeless," Snow says.

"If you really want to do something about the homeless, provide them with a living wage that will allow them to enter the housing market," Snow says. "Low-income people have been priced out of the housing market." According to Snow, the major structural causes of homelessness are the economic downturn that occurred during the mid-'70s in the Northeast and Midwest, decline in wages coupled with an increase in the price of housing, general unemployment and "Reagan's cutting of federal benefits."

Snow dismisses the popular argument that the majority of homeless are deinstitutionalized mentally ill. "When you accept that argument, you do two

The city government, like that of Houston, has, held fast to an interpretation of the state constitution that prohibits cities from giving things of value directly to private citizens.

**And Austin:** Here in the state capital a liberal mayor, Frank Cooksey, seems determined to act on behalf of Austin's 1,300 homeless. Recently Cooksey made sure a new Salvation Army shelter will be located downtown, where it is needed. Shortly after taking office in 1985 he established a task force to study the needs of the city's homeless. And he seems determined to implement the task force's recommendations, including a \$1 million appropriation—to be matched by the county—for operation of the shelter.

The new Salvation Army shelter scheduled to open in August will serve the needs of both single men and the families that currently make up 43 percent of Austin's homeless. But in working on long-term solutions it is unlikely that Cooksey and other mayors similarly inclined will get much help from the state's chief executive.

In 1978, the year that Clements was first elected governor, 10,000 meals were served in the Austin Salvation Army building 10 blocks south of the capitol. By 1983, the last year of Clement's first term, that number had increased to 112,000. Not all of that can be blamed on public-policy decisions; low demand for oil bears as heavily on the state's fortunes as on those of its oilman-governor. But when Clements, after an absence of four years, promised in his January 1987 inaugural address "to leave no one behind as we move Texas forward," it's unlikely that he had in mind the men queued up in the Salvation Army bean line.

Continued on page 22

things," Snow says. "You medicalize the problem, and you deflect attention from the larger structural, social causes of homelessness. Homelessness is not a medical problem; it's a social problem."

The peak of deinstitutionalization, according to Snow, occurred in the mid-'70s. "And where were all of these homeless people then," he asks.

Snow, along with Leon Anderson and Susan Baker, recently conducted an extensive year-long field study of 911 homeless people living in Austin. They determined that only 10 percent had histories of previous institutional care. Ten percent, Snow claims, is a significant number, but nowhere near a majority.

"Before we diagnose someone as mentally ill," Snow says, "let's take them off the street, provide them with decent meals, lodging, clean clothing, a little security. Then take a look at them."

Snow also challenges the popular and somewhat romantic notion that many chose to be homeless. "When someone tells you that he chose this way of life, that tells you something. If this was his choice, what were the other options?"

Anderson and Snow are writing a book on the homeless that will include a socio-anthropological examination of habitat, survival strategies and a look at how the homeless maintain a sense of dignity and personal worth. "I don't think that humans ever lose their sense of dignity," Snow says. "It's one of the lessons that we learned from the Holocaust." —L.D.



# EDITORIAL



Katne Kullwitz

## Real Baby M issue ignored

Last week, as seemed likely from the manner in which he conducted the trial, Judge Harvey R. Sorkow ruled that custody of Baby M would be given to her biological father William Stern and his wife, and that Baby M's biological mother by artificial insemination, Mary Beth Whitehead, would have no legal authority to see the child again. But while the result was easy to predict, the judge's upholding of the surrogate motherhood contract was unexpected. More than that. If the contract is valid, as Sorkow ruled it is, then the second part of the trial seems to have been totally unnecessary. And yet it was the second phase—the custody phase of the trial—that created all the publicity about Whitehead's allegedly inferior lifestyle.

The judge ruled that surrogate mother contracts are valid because the right to procreate is constitutionally guaranteed, and if "one has a right to procreate coitally, then one has the right to reproduce noncoitally."

But at issue is not simply the right of the childless couple to "use what lawful means are possible to gain a child," as Sorkow claimed in his ruling. There is also the question of the surrogate mother's rights, of whether or not such a contract might be inherently damaging to her. Sorkow saw no need to bother with this. He refused to consider whether a contract to bear someone else's child for a fee might be so harmful to the mother as to make it undesirable as a matter of public policy. And that is the real issue in this case.

To ignore this issue is bad enough, but if he had ended the trial there, Sorkow could have ruled in favor of the Sterns and the case would have been appealed to a higher court. Instead, he withheld judgment on the contract until after conducting two months of class-bound hearings designed how best to further degrade Whitehead in the name of determining the child's welfare. Not surprisingly, the judge then ruled that Whitehead and her husband in years past had been "plagued with separations, domestic violence and severe financial difficulties requiring numerous household moves," and that they "give a reduced level of importance" to education. All of which makes them less desirable parents than the Sterns, who "have a private, quiet and unremarkable life," and, being much more highly educated and well-off, "would initiate and encourage intellectual curiosity and learning for the child." Overlooked by the judge was the fact that the Whiteheads have two children who by all accounts are normal, healthy and happy. In short, the Whiteheads appear to be perfectly adequate parents, whereas the Sterns are an unknown quality when it comes to parenting.

But our point is not to make a case for either the Whiteheads or the

Sterns. Both families have clearly suffered as a result of this experience, and neither is to blame. Nor is it likely under existing law that the courts would invalidate surrogate-parent contracts in the absence of state legislation on the subject. But the judge in this case would best have served the public interest by limiting his decision to the case's contractual aspect, so that the state legislature might then be moved to decide what is best as a matter of public policy. ■

## A war that cannot be won

In their most successful military operation in years, El Salvador's leftist guerrillas on March 31 destroyed one of the regime's most important and highly defended military posts. Only 36 miles from San Salvador, the capital, the base was designed by the U.S. Special Forces in 1982 to be impregnable. Initially, Salvadoran Army Chief of Staff Gen. Adolfo O. Blandon reported that 43 soldiers had been killed in the attack and 35 wounded. This figure was officially raised the next day to 64 killed and 60 wounded, but the true figures seem to be 80 killed and more than 100 wounded—almost three-fourths of the troops garrisoned there.

This raid puts the lie on reports over the past year that the guerrilla movement has been contained and is on the decline. It makes clear that despite \$1 billion in military aid and \$2.5 billion in economic aid, the sham democratic regime of Napoleon Duarte has been unable to win over the hearts and minds of the people of El Salvador.

This is apparent in the relative abilities of the guerrillas and the government in gaining intelligence about each other. The raid, like two similar though less destructive ones in the last two years, was based on detailed intelligence provided by infiltrators. Yet despite the considerable planning that it required—every significant structure on the base was targeted and destroyed and the American military adviser was sought out and killed—the army's intelligence service, recently expanded under CIA guidance, had no inkling that the raid was about to happen.

This, of course, is not a matter of the guerrillas' technical superiority. On that score, the government wins hands down. But it is a clear indication of popular support, or toleration, of the rebels and of hostility toward the regime. And it exposes the fallacy, both moral and practical, of U.S. policy in Central America. If reason and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations are not enough to move American policymakers to reverse their intervention in Central America, perhaps it will gradually dawn on them that they are on a side that can now win only by wiping the region off the face of the map. ■

## IN THESE TIMES

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# LETTERS

## Salable commodities

**I**N HIS ZEAL TO PORTRAY THE "BABY M" TANGLE as a simple morality play, Daniel Lazare casts Mary Beth Whitehead as a gullible *naif* who just wanted to coax God into "helping her infertile sister conceive," and who scarcely even noticed the complex legal contract she was signing or the \$10,000 she was paid by the Sterns (*JTT*, March 18). He thereby patronizes working-class women as surely as do the attorneys and psychologists he so strongly condemns.

I'm saddened by Lazare's one-sided approach, and by the thought of Phyllis Chesler's pseudo-feminist stormtroopers shouting vituperation at Elizabeth Stern.

What socialist or feminist could fail to see that the only "villain" in this sad case is the system that transforms everything—even babies and wombs—into salable commodities for the enrichment of savvy middlemen? Both Whitehead and Stern have been hurt by that system; surely we can spare a little compassion for each of them.

Karen L. Field  
Topeka, Kan.

## Conspiracy

**Y**OUR ARTICLE ABOUT BABY M (*JTT*, MARCH 25) may have missed a level of the story—who really was the surrogate parent? You said the rich couple took advantage of the innocent working-class woman Mrs. Whitehead by hiring her to produce their baby. However, you failed to point out that Whitehead's husband had had a vasectomy and was unable to produce more children. Perhaps Mrs. Whitehead wanted her own baby and decided to exploit the situation with the rich couple. She never intended to return Baby M to its genetic parent; instead, she used Mr. Stern as a surrogate father in order to have her own baby. It could be a classic case of screw somebody else to get what you want; that's not class consciousness in action; that's just immorality.

H.M. Roth  
Sacramento, Calif.

## Noxious byproduct

**W**HILE DINO JOSEPH DRUDI MAKES SOME GOOD points for keeping the 55 mph speed limit (*Letters*, March 25), I am appalled that for him socialism means restraining "the feeling of expanded 'personal freedom' [of] individuals," as well as "regulating the heck out of how fast they can go." I am also appalled that Drudi puts personal freedom in quotations, implying that it is another of the noxious byproducts of capitalism that socialism will eliminate.

Herbert J. Gans  
New York

## Guess what?

**E**DDIE GOLDMAN'S LETTER ON HOWARD BEACH (*JTT*, March 25) is embarrassing. He simply repeats as truth the claims made by lawyer Alton Maddox and then lists three

small union locals who believe what they were told, as he does.

I can't rebut all Goldman's inaccuracies, but the following should suffice: assault victim Cedric Sandiford refused to cooperate with police, Goldman says, only because after three days of trying to cooperate, he concluded the cops were discounting his version of events and hence were "covering up" the case.

Guess what? The cops were right. Sandiford's version was wrong, and his stated reasons for non-cooperation are lies. Who says so? The special prosecutor, who had to throw out Sandiford's version entirely in order to develop the scenario for his murder indictments. *Sandiford's version would have let the white youths off.* Did Goldman miss this?

I never excused police mistreatment of Sandiford; it was an outrage. But police *suspicion* of him was entirely justified. Sandiford lied about what he and his friends were doing in the area, and he still won't tell us. Whatever it was, it doesn't excuse the assault, but why lie about it? Why were a stolen beeper and fake gun found on the body of Michael Griffith? Why did the third victim, Timothy Grimes, who escaped home, immediately begin packing to leave town in the middle of the night, according to his girlfriend, whom he later stabbed, instead of seeking help?

Why doesn't it concern Goldman, a man of the left, that Maddox vilified and smeared Dominick Blum, driver of the vehicle that killed Griffith? Doesn't it matter that thousands of decent working white New Yorkers were alienated by these smears?

Goldman says I distorted the facts; what motive do I have for doing so? We all agree Howard Beach was an outrage and the criminal justice system is racist. But you can't build a movement against it by vilification and lies that alienate fair-minded people.

Jim Sleeper  
New York

## Sloppy reporting

**J**OEL BLEIFUSS (*JTT*, MARCH 25) DESCRIBES EDWIN Meese's role in the prosecution of students involved in the 1964 University of California Free Speech protest thus: "When 773 students occupied a campus building, Meese ordered them arrested. A week later the students were taken to an auditorium, tried en masse and handed sentences of from one month to one year in prison."

At that time Meese was an attorney on the staff of the Alameda County district attorney and had no power to order the arrests. The arrests were ordered by the uni-

versity president with the backing of Gov. Edmund G. Brown Sr. (Pat, not Jerry), a liberal who was worried about possible right-wing opposition to his re-election campaign in 1966. He could have spared the effort. He was beaten anyway in 1966 by a right-wing actor named Ronald Reagan.

Meese did not appear in the case until he was assigned to prosecute the students at their mass trial in the auditorium of the Berkeley Veterans Memorial Building more than a week later. The students were on bail and arrived under their own power. I bailed out two of them on the evening they were arrested. None of the defendants was sentenced to prison since the charges were misdemeanors carrying county jail sentences. With the possible exceptions of the leaders of the protest, all received suspended sentences and did no time.

As a retired newspaperman, I detest sloppy reporting. Reporters on the left should be especially diligent in seeking accuracy because errors even in minor details can discredit them.

John M. Eshleman  
Berkeley, Calif.

## Optimism

**D**ANIEL LAZARE'S EFFORT AT REVIEWING LENNI Brenner's book *Jews in America Today* (*JTT*, March 25) did little service to anyone. Lazare condemns the book for containing "fundamental" faults, while the author is deemed "dangerously confused." According to the review, the book is "unfocused and rambling, a tirade rather than a sober political study."

Lazare then devotes a full page in *JTT* advancing a peculiar thesis in support of this condemnation. Brenner's book argues that even if fascism were to take shape in the U.S. it would not be anti-Semitic. This proposition—which most reasonable people would agree with—is challenged by Lazare who launches into his own emotional "analysis" of racism in America.

The ensuing 1,300-word "review" debates a single point (any other aspect of Brenner's book is ignored) which is sustained with one sentence of evidence. According to Lazare, the danger of a strong anti-Semitic movement (not to mention eventual success) is evidenced by "the ravings of certain fundamentalist preachers, in the pronouncements of certain black leaders, in presidential visits [sic] to Bitburg, and in no less a figure than...Patrick Buchanan..." Right.

The last part of the review discusses oppression against blacks in the U.S., although what Howard Beach or Forsyth County (the

significance of which Mr. Lazare does not understand) has to do with *Jews in America Today* is never made very clear. Given that his best evidence of anti-Semitism in the U.S. includes "the pronouncements of certain black leaders," this confusion is not surprising.

Lazare concludes with the statement that "the system is unstable and prone to crisis. Jews have a right to feel insecure, as do blacks, women, gays and working people generally." Those who consider themselves part of this cliched and meaningless grouping doubtless appreciate being allowed to share in the reviewer's own insecurities. On the other hand, the rest of humanity must simply feel relieved. All this time everyone else in the world was feeling insecure for no reason! There is something to be said for Lazare's optimism, if nothing else.

Amos Roe  
North Freedom, Wis.

## Foot down

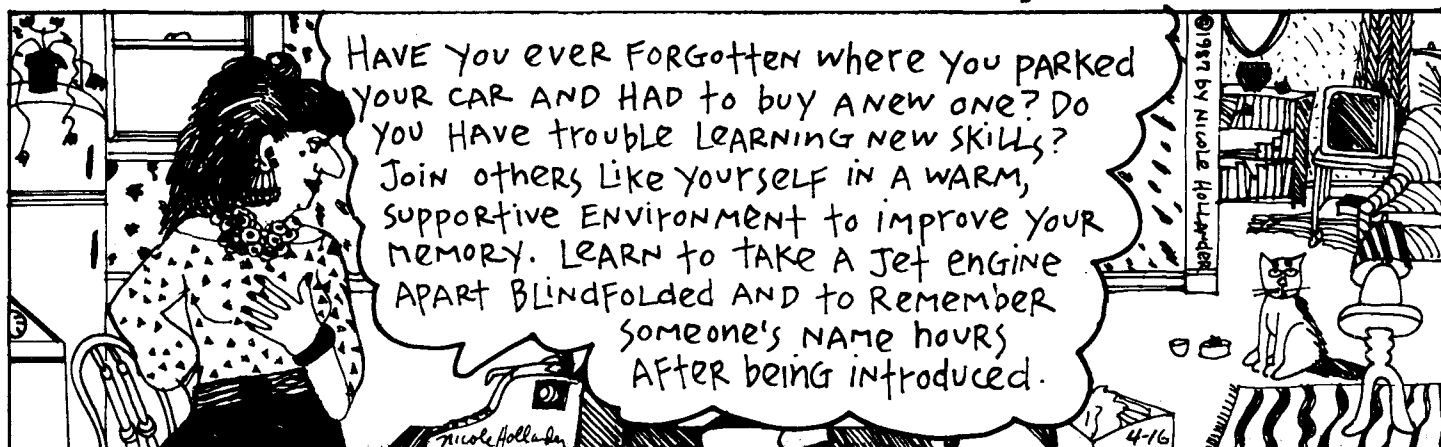
**I**T WAS NICE TO READ THAT ALICE WALKER'S daughter did quit smoking (*JTT*, March 11), apparently on her own initiative. It doesn't look as if the kid got much help from Mom, who talks a good line about everything beginning at home, but then didn't seem to be willing to follow her own maxim. One of the main reasons that smoking was only a furtive and temporary phase of adolescence for me, and I suspect for many others, was that my parents made it clear that they absolutely would not tolerate my smoking at home or anywhere else in their presence.

And this was back in the days when there was even more cigarette advertising than now (it was all over the TV screen then), when the cancer connection was just beginning to be made and when the air in restaurants and at parties was usually blue with smoke. It's annoying to hear Walker ritualistically shove off the blame on "the rich white men who own the tobacco companies" rather than exercise a little basic parental responsibility at home.

Rick Henderson  
Berkeley

**Editor's note:** Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letter—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

## SYLVIA



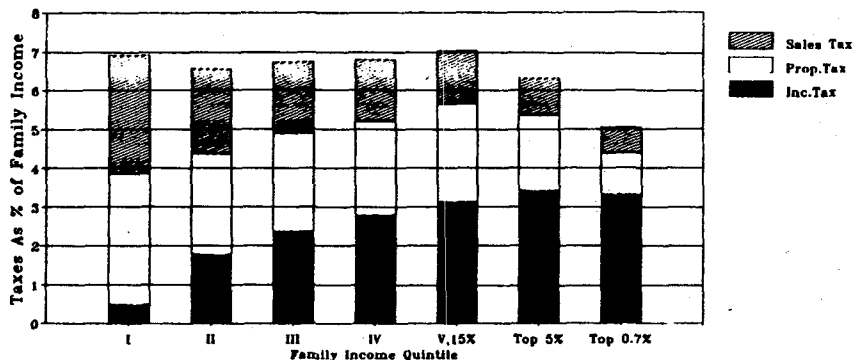
by Nicole Hollander



# Tax battles moving to state capitals

## NATIONWIDE STATE & LOCAL TAXES IN 1985 As Shares of Family Income

	I	II	III	IV	V, 15%	Top 5%	Top 0.7%
85 INCOME	\$7,564	\$17,848	\$27,266	\$38,853	\$57,701	\$161,341	\$527,241
Income Tax	0.5%	1.8%	2.4%	2.8%	3.1%	3.4%	3.3%
Property Tax	3.4%	2.6%	2.5%	2.4%	2.5%	1.9%	1.1%
Sales Tax	3.1%	2.2%	1.8%	1.6%	1.4%	1.0%	0.7%
TOTAL TAX	6.9%	6.6%	6.8%	6.8%	7.1%	6.3%	5.1%



By Darryl Brown

**T**HE BATTLE FOR TAX REFORM MOVES from Washington to state capitals this year, and corporate lobbyists are already beginning to push state legislatures to make up for some of the shelters that businesses lost in federal tax changes. Drastic overhaul is needed in state tax codes, but gaping loopholes and inequitable tax burdens are more pervasive at the local level than in the old federal laws. As Congress did last year, state legislatures need to abolish tax shelters rather than expand them.

Federal officials perceived that faith in the nation's tax code had greatly eroded. The ideals of progressivity and equity—on which the sliding scale of 20 tax brackets was based—had been radically undermined by a panoply of exemptions, deductions, credits and shelters. Many corporations paid little or no tax, and many wealthy individuals owed less than poor and working-class citizens. People knew the system was unfair, and compliance rates reflected it.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986, for all its shortcomings—the most unfortunate being its virtual abandonment of a progressive rate structure—changed that. Loopholes were closed, a minimum corporate tax was imposed, the poor were taken off the tax rolls. There are now few ways that wealthy citizens can pay less than low-income people.

But that is not true in most states. A new study by the Washington-based Citizens for Tax Justice reveals that state tax systems are in many cases far more regressive and unjust than federal laws even before reform. "With very few exceptions," concludes the CTJ report, *The Sorry State of State Taxes*, "state tax systems are shocking in their inequity."

**The need for reform:** Nationwide, families in the top seven-tenths of 1 percent of the income bracket pay 5.1 percent of their income in state and local taxes, while families below the poverty line pay almost

7 percent. In several states the inequity is far greater.

CTJ identifies the "filthy 15" states that tax their poorest residents at least twice as much as their richest. The top six—Wyoming, South Dakota, Texas, New Hampshire, Tennessee and Nevada—tax the poorest fifth of their citizens at a rate at least four times as high as the rate levied on the wealthiest taxpayers. Wyoming, the worst offender, takes 4.4 percent of poor people's income in taxes and .9 percent of rich people's income. The study also singles out the "terrible 10" states in which tax burden as a share of income is twice as high for middle-income residents—those in the middle 20 percent of income distribution—as for the wealthiest 1 percent.

Inequities have grown for many reasons, including abuses in the old federal tax system on which most state tax codes are based. For instance, in 1985 federal adjusted gross income—that is, taxable income—came to 64 percent of real income for the top 1 percent of taxpayers, but averaged 95 percent of total income for the majority in the lower 80 percent of the income bracket. Most states use this adjusted income figure to calculate state tax liability.

A more important reason for vast inequity of state tax burdens is increasing reliance on regressive sales and property taxes. Twenty-one states have increased their sales tax in the last six years (in 46 separate legislated increases), while only one state has cut it. Sales taxes hit the poor—who spend more of their income on necessities subject to sales taxes—much harder than the rich.

Finally, most states have not increased their personal income tax exemption to keep pace with inflation. In 37 states, the exemption—which benefits poor people disproportionately—is now worth from 25 to 77 percent less than in 1971. The Minnesota Department of Revenue recently found that 51 percent of the state's corporations—about 25,000 businesses with combined gross sales of \$30 million—paid

no income tax last year. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported an identical situation in Illinois, where nearly 60 percent of corporations pay no income tax. In New York, the state's Tax Reform Commission found 4,000 companies with taxable income paying no taxes, thanks mostly to the investment tax credit.

**The climate for reform:** Twenty-two states have had to go back and make additional cuts in their fiscal 1987 budgets—the highest since the '82 recession. The weak fiscal position of many states, especially those hard hit by depressions in the agriculture and energy industries, make legislators less willing to give incentives that cost the state needed revenue. Yet regardless of what federal overhaul does to state coffers, it does virtually nothing to relieve the burden of state taxes on the poor. Even before last year's reform, state and local taxes consumed a greater portion of income from the poor than did federal taxes. Now it's worse. Most low-income working people pay no federal taxes, but they face the same, or even greater, state tax liability. This is partly because state income taxes are unaffected by increases in the federal standard deduction and personal exemption. But it is mostly due to the fact that regressive property and sales taxes make up nearly 90 percent of the state and local tax burden on people living at or below the poverty line.

Policy analysts in state capitals and in Washington, led by Citizens for Tax Justice, insist that the states restore faith in state tax systems by taking the poor off the rolls, making the combined burden of income, sales and property taxes progressive and ensuring that active and profitable companies pay a fair share.

**Methods for reform:** Several economists and tax analysts from unions and liberal policy centers have formed an Ad Hoc State Tax Coalition to facilitate the next wave of reform. The coalition's members—Citizens for Tax Justice, National Center for Policy Alternatives, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the Children's Defense Fund and others—along with nonpartisan organizations such as the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Council of State Budget Officers, have researched options to make state tax systems more equitable and progressive.

Many necessary changes are simply copies of federal reforms enacted last year, such as a minimum tax for corporations and individuals and removal of poor people from the tax rolls. For states that use modified flat-rate income taxes, a sliding scale of standard deductions that shrink or disappear in the higher income brackets can make the system progressive.

Bigger problems are sales and property taxes, which hit low-income residents much harder than the wealthy. Steve Gold of the Conference of State Legislatures recommends "circuit breakers" to give property tax relief to low-income residents. Half the states now have some form of circuit breaker, but most apply only to a small group, usually elderly homeowners. A second option, used by New Mexico, gives refundable credits to relieve sales tax liability on the poor. Both mechanisms are easily targeted to low-income citizens by phasing out in

the higher income levels.

On the business side, there is widespread criticism of state investment tax credits. The federal ITC was the biggest loophole created by Congress last year. Congress eliminated the credit relatively easily because it had clearly failed; it greatly reduced business taxes and spurred little real investment in return. State versions of the credit have equally lackluster track records and are a major target of state tax reformers.

Full taxation of capital gains is one of the most hotly disputed reforms. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has already issued dire warnings that abolishing the state capital gains preference would kill business investment and lead to corporate flight, but liberal economists say axing the tax break is crucial to restoring equity. Capital gains—profits from the sale of assets such as property or a share of stock—account for a large portion of the income of wealthy taxpayers and corporations. Congress concluded the exemption did little to help economic growth. The deduction makes even less sense on the state level, because (1) it gives exemptions for profits on assets outside the state and (2) the sharply lower state income tax rates make the deduction worth much less—rarely enough to influence a capital investment decision.

There are promising developments in some state capitals. Virginia's Gov. Gerald Baliles has a lot of support to use the state's additional revenue from federal reform to relieve the tax burden on poor and middle-income residents. Minnesota Gov. Rudy Perpich's tax overhaul plan will try to rally support around the theme of "fairness" and aims to make sure all corporations pay income tax (while cutting the corporate rate). Washington Gov. Booth Gardner, whose state has one of the most regressive tax systems in the country, has promised sweeping reform to cure "something rotten in our state tax system." He is searching for ways to reduce reliance on the sales tax but so far has not proposed what some state lawmakers and economists say is needed: an income tax.

Prospects on other fronts are less promising. In New York, Republicans who control the state Senate have convinced Gov. Mario Cuomo to retain substantial breaks for capital gains and are pushing for more. Iowa's Gov. Terry Branstad suggests cutting the income tax rates at the top of the scale to make the state more appealing to well-paid executives. Many states may settle for simply cutting income tax rates.

The pressures on states from business lobbies and neighboring states are great. Tax overhaul is hindered by the "war between the states" to see who can lure industry by giving away the biggest tax breaks. If a state doesn't keep its tax rates on par with its neighbors, the argument goes, companies will move across the state line.

Tax giveaways keep states in internecine competition, reducing revenue bases that finance needed public services. State tax systems that are equitable as well as efficient and that adequately support public services benefit business as well as individuals and are ultimately essential to long-term economic well-being. The second battle for tax reform, fought on 50 fronts, will be more difficult than the first. But the outcome is no less important.

Darryl K. Brown is a researcher in Washington, D.C.



By Holly Sklar

**F**OR MORE THAN FOUR YEARS THE Contadora peace initiative has built a road for peace in Central America. It is a road the Reagan administration will not take. For Contadora's way of coexistence demands a historic shift in the imperial course of U.S. foreign policy.

Seventeen years ago, National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger upbraided Chile's Foreign Minister Gabriel Valdes, a Christian Democrat, for giving an unwelcome lesson in North-South inequities to President Richard Nixon. Said Kissinger: "You come here speaking of Latin America, but this is not important. Nothing important can come from the South. History has never been produced in the South."

In January 1983 the foreign ministers of Panama, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia launched their quest for Central American peace from the Panamanian island, Contadora—an appropriate site given the growth of Latin American solidarity around the Panama Canal Treaty. This solidarity was powerfully reinforced during the Malvinas (Falklands) war.

The Canal Treaty holds a key to understanding the U.S. response to Contadora. The DeConcini Condition states that "if the Canal is closed, or its operations are interfered with, [the U.S. and Panama shall each] have the right to take such steps as each deems necessary...including the use of military force in the Republic of Panama..." The treaty thus preserved the U.S.' perpetual authority to intervene unilaterally in the Americas. In the now famous words of a confidential 1927 State Department memorandum:

"We do control the destinies of Central America and we do so for the simple reason that the national interest absolutely dictates such a course. ...Until now Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power, while those which we do not recognize and support fall. Nicaragua has become a test case."

Sixty years after Sandino battled the U.S. Marines, Nicaragua is again a test case, but this time with continental meaning: Latin American sovereignty vs. U.S. control.

Contadora founders actually won the first round of the current Nicaragua test case at a June 1979 meeting of the Organization of American States when the Carter administration request for an OAS "peacekeeping" force, seen as a plan for *Somocismo* without Somoza, was defeated. For the first time since its founding, the OAS rejected a U.S. proposal to intervene militarily in the Americas. Contadora would institutionalize that constraint.

The Contadora system of collective security contrasts starkly with the U.S. notion of "collective self-defense" now being employed illegally in Central America. In its June 27 ruling, the World Court rejected the Reagan administration argument—made before withdrawal from the case—that U.S. actions were justified as part of a collective self-defense effort to protect Nicaragua's neighbors.

All versions of the Contadora Treaty have addressed security concerns with detailed provisions for withdrawal of foreign military advisers, prohibition of foreign military bases and aid to insurgent forces, restriction of military maneuvers and limits on

## Still alive, Contadora challenges Cold War

troops and armaments. In the current draft, treaty compliance would be verified by an International Corps of Inspectors and Verification and Control Commission.

Aiming to sabotage Contadora at the least cost to itself and the greatest cost to Nicaragua, the Reagan administration has employed a three-part strategy: paying public tribute to the Contadora process in order to co-opt Congress and paint Nicaragua as the intransigent party. Pressuring Contadora countries to realign their policies with U.S. objectives. Pressuring Central American allies to oppose restrictions on U.S. actions and to isolate Nicaragua—vetoing treaty drafts when Nicaragua approves and professing support of drafts Nicaragua wants changed.

When Nicaragua agreed to sign the September 1984 version of the treaty, to which El Salvador, Costa Rica and Honduras had given their preliminary approval, the U.S. pressed its proxies to backpedal from the treaty summit as if it were the edge of a cliff. The September 1985 version of the treaty, drawn up under concerted U.S. pressure, was unacceptable to Nicaragua.

In January 1986, the Contadora Group and Support Group of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Peru (formed in July 1985) rebounded from stalemate with the Caraballeda Message. It called for a halt to outside support for irregular forces and a resumption of bilateral talks between the U.S. and Nicaragua, asserting "Respectful negotiation between them, with mutual and equitable concessions, is a condition for regional detente."

Last April—around the time of the widely misinterpreted Habib initiative—I asked a Western ambassador in Central America why there couldn't be a tripartite agreement involving the U.S., Nicaragua and Contadora that accommodated the security concerns of all parties. He said there was some possibility for this in 1984, during bilateral negotiations in Manzanillo. Nicaragua would have agreed, provided internal structures were not addressed. But, said the ambassador, "the U.S. was never interested in that sort of deal." Later, he observed, "It's geography, as Henry Kissinger said during his commission, 'The U.S. could not accept even a Yugoslavia in Central America.'"

Last summer, when Congress voted to support contra aid, more nails were driven into Contadora's coffin. In November—following reports of U.S. officials pressing Central American allies to freeze or break relations with Nicaragua—Honduras and Costa Rica conditioned their future Contadora participation on Nicaragua dropping its suits against them in the International Court of Justice.

The Latin Americans have kept Contadora alive in the hope of a dramatic breakthrough. Even gravely ill, Contadora serves as Latin America's alternative to U.S. intervention, an antidote to Nicaraguan isolation and a support for Hondurans and Costa Ricans resisting the proxy roles assigned their countries by the U.S. But the prevailing

mood has grown increasingly pessimistic—the widespread question is whether war will take the form of deepening "Lebanonization" or "Vietnamization" with a U.S. invasion.

In late January the secretaries general of the UN and Organization of American States (OAS) joined in an unsuccessful mission to revive Contadora negotiations.

Attention has turned to a Costa Rican peace initiative, apparently designed to cramp Contadora and present Nicaragua's alleged lack of democracy as the central regional problem. Guatemala bucked the anti-Nicaragua tide, working instead to bring Managua into a more open negotiating process to be tested at the Central American presidents' summit in May. With next year's contra aid jeopardized by Reaganate the administration is trying to neutralize negotiations short of a negotiated Sandinista surrender, insure continued contra aid and pursue preparations for a possible invasion.

Even if one suspended disbelief long enough to imagine the Reagan administration would permit a regional treaty to be signed, it is no insurance policy against war. Indeed, if the fundamental assumptions and goals of U.S. policy remained intact, it could well be used as a license for escalation—on the pretext of Nicaraguan violations.

The consequences of U.S. compliance with Contadora would be far-reaching. Without U.S. military involvement, the contras would surely be defeated and the Sal-

vadoran revolutionaries would almost as surely achieve recognition as a legitimate political force under a peace settlement or prevail militarily.

Contadora must be seen "within the context of growing Latin American unity," reflected in the mid-December agreement by the eight Latin American Contadora sponsors to establish a permanent forum. The so-called Group of Rio de Janeiro will meet three times a year to discuss regional issues including Central America, foreign debt and "independent development." A Brazilian diplomat observed, "We're aiming at something like the Group of Seven," the annual Western summit. The achievement of a Contadora Treaty would sanction Nicaragua's right to reshape its economy and could galvanize collective action around the debt crisis—the economic Big Stick—that could, in turn, rekindle the movement for a new international economic order.

"Deep down," says Nicaraguan Ambassador Carlos Tunnerman, "Contadora signifies the end of the Monroe Doctrine." It also challenges the Cold War order by rejecting the mutually-recognized superpower right to police their respective spheres of influence. A Contadora Treaty would give a boost to demilitarization efforts around the world—notably such anti-bases campaigns as in Panama and the Philippines—and establish a precedent for autonomous systems of regional collective security. In short, Contadora can be seen as a building block for non-alignment and a new international economic order, twin pillars of history made in the south. ■

Holly Sklar is writing a book on U.S. policy toward Nicaragua. Her latest work is *Reagan, Trilateralism and the Neoliberals: Containment and Intervention in the 1980s* (South End Press).

## AMERICAN PICTURES

### MOST SUCCESSFUL CAMPUS EVENT OF THE 80's:

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Required for freshman orientation in Dartmouth, Cornell, Boston University etc.

### BACKGROUND

The show is based on the 5 years a young Dane, Jacob Holdt, hitchhiked over 100,000 miles in the USA. He bought film for his camera by selling blood twice weekly. He lived in more than 400 homes - from the poorest southern sharecroppers, to some of America's wealthiest families (Pabst, Rockefeller). He joined the rebellion in Wounded Knee, followed criminals in the ghettos during muggings, sneaked inside to work in southern slave camps and infiltrated secret Ku Klux Klan meetings. While working with prisoners he saw two of his friends assassinated. By the time he returned to Denmark 12 of his American friends had been murdered.

"Not since Jacob Riis' book of social criticism *How the Other Half lives* has there been as powerful a record of American living as *American Pictures*. Its presentation at the Cannes Film Festival created a sensation."  
*The San Francisco Film Festival.*

"What makes *American Pictures* so disturbingly powerful is the cumulative effects of Holdt's photographs combined with his outsider's analysis of the dynamics of poverty and oppression in the U.S."  
*Los Angeles Times*



A show and a book of a Danish vagabond's journey through the underclass

"Powerful, intense"  
*New York Times*

### THE BOOK

The book, which is based on the show, is an international bestseller. The Village Voice revealed that the U.S. State Department grew worried about its impact overseas and commissioned photographers to present the "other side" of America. Written in a personal tone it is now a popular classroom supplement in American schools. 800 photos, the bulk in color.

I order \_\_\_\_\_ copy of the book. I enclose a money order or check of \$15 paperback or \$18 for hardcover.

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## Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina 1850-1900

By Paul D. Escott  
University of North Carolina, 344 pp.,  
\$29.00

By Bill Farrell

**A**S MANY HISTORIANS HAVE NOTED, the history of the American South is fundamentally different from that of the rest of the U.S. Various explanations have been put forth to account for this difference. The abolitionists and their intellectual descendants believed Southern slavery to be the key variable. Others saw the difference as primarily cultural—the Cavalier versus the Yankee.

Much later, C. Vann Woodward argued that the South's experience of military defeat and occupation—traits shared with most of the world, though not America—explained much of this divergence. American success in overcoming every major historic crisis it faced led to an optimistic belief in unlimited progress and a sense that history happened only to other people. The Southern experience precluded such a view: Southerners knew that history had happened to them. Thus, in Woodward's view, the history of the South provided a window through which Americans might understand the world.

Indeed, there is a striking parallel between the American South and the Third World. Until comparatively recently, the South, unlike the rest of the nation, was an underdeveloped region. And so, in a way, an examination of Southern history provides a means by which Americans can begin to comprehend the Third World experience. Yet only in the last 20 years have scholars begun to view the South in terms suggesting underdevelopment. Marxist historians and sociologists provided much of the impetus for such an approach, which—needless to say—was resisted by mainstream scholars.

If stagnation and a low-wage economy are finally being recognized as characteristics shared by the South and underdeveloped countries, perhaps other commonalities will now be explored. There are some obvious candidates. The kidnapping, torture and murder by a right-wing death squad of a leader of agricultural laborers is a foreign event—one that an American might expect to occur in El Salvador. Yet if one were to point out that the death squad had been composed of members of the Ku Klux Klan and the victim was an ex-slave, the atrocity becomes recognizably domestic: a terrorist act committed in the American South. Whether in El Salvador or the American South, the attempt to organize agricultural laborers was a challenge that the

## HISTORY



## Reconstructing the South in a Third World image

ruling class would not tolerate.

**The elite defense:** In *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina 1850-1900*, Paul Escott examines the North Carolina elite's defense of power. Their efforts were initially unsuccessful, however, as they were forced to yield in the elimination of property restrictions on suffrage. This struggle had injected a class issue into North Carolina politics in the 1850s. Prior to Fort Sumter, a majority of North Carolinians opposed secession, believing that civil war would be a rich man's war and a poor man's fight. Such emotion caused the elite to acquiesce in the raising of taxation of slaves, a measure they had resisted.

Soon after the war began, the unity of North Carolina society started to fade. The yeomanry correctly perceived that they were required to make sacrifices not demanded of the wealthy. Opposition to the war and desertions among North Carolina troops grew, as did violent resistance to Confederate authority. Many deserters gathered together—some in bands large enough to intimidate and control local Confederate courts and state agencies—prompting what amounted to internal war. As the Civil War neared its

end, Escott asserts, some of the elite feared an alliance between lower-class whites and blacks.

But the racism of the white population rendered their fear unfounded, while the elite successfully resisted all efforts to expand democratic rights for whites—culminating in the August 1866 defeat of a new state constitution containing a few minor democratizing features unacceptable to the elite. There it would have remained if the North, fearing that President Andrew Johnson “was losing the peace,” had not voted in the 1866 congressional elections for a change in Reconstruction.

In 1867, Congress required black suffrage. Under federal protection, a lower class interracial alliance grew within the Republican Party of North Carolina. The 1868 state Constitutional Convention had an overwhelming Republican majority, resulting in a new democratic constitution, under which the Republicans won the governorship and the legislature, as new men both black and white assumed office.

The elite responded with a propaganda campaign emphasizing white supremacy and the Ku Klux Klan's reign of terror in the Piedmont, where the interracial alliance

was most vulnerable. The Klan murdered black and white Republicans, burned down black schools and also tortured, whipped and sexually mutilated victims. The Democrats swept the 1870 elections. The Republican governor was impeached. (Ten of the 15 counties that went Democratic had experienced substantial Klan violence.) Though the Republicans re-

**In a way, an examination of Southern history provides a means by which Americans can begin to comprehend the Third World experience.**

gained the governorship in 1872 under the protection of federal troops, the interracial alliance was severely weakened. In 1876, aided by gerrymandering, the elite—through the Democratic Party—won the governorship and legislature.

Reconstruction had ended. In 1877, the legislature abolished elected local government, returning local power to appointed officials. The next challenge to the elite was in the 1890s, when exploited white farmers, their needs ignored by the Democrats, formed the People's or Populist Party, which ran an independent ticket in the 1892 elections. Retribution by the Democrats and a severe depression led to a fusion of Populists and black Republicans in 1894, which took control of the legislature. In 1896, the fusionists elected a Republican governor.

**The Carolina coups:** The elite responded once again with terrorism—carried out by Red Shirt clubs instead of the Klan—and white supremacy. Terrorism against fusionists surpassed that of Reconstruction. In 1898, after months of planning, Wilmington's business and political elite succeeded in a bloody coup d'état against the city's Republican government. The federal government ignored the outrage, a lesson not lost in North Carolina. Using vote fraud and massive violence, the Democrats won 52.8 percent of the vote in the 1898 elections, resulting in a huge majority in the state legislature. The Democrats disenfranchised virtually all blacks and many poor whites. In 1899, to prevent and stigmatize interracial cooperation, the Democrats enacted segregation laws. As Escott states, the elite “imposed an undemocratic electoral system so complete and effective that all future political discourse had a restricted character.”

When the North failed after the Civil War to destroy the power of the Southern ruling class (through measures such as land reform), it sealed the fate of Southern blacks and poor whites, dooming the South to poverty in the process. The control of land, the major source of wealth in an agricultural society, gave the elite the basis and endurance to control state apparatus and the means of violence. Blacks continued as exploited agricultural labor, while non-elite whites continued to lose land, becoming a rural proletariat to be exploited as agricultural workers or underpaid mill hands.

In the North and Midwest, rising wages were an incentive for the mechanization of agriculture, increasing productivity while encouraging growth and innovation. In the South, attempts to raise wages were met with violence, as the South's low-wage, sometimes no-wage, no-demand economy stifled industrial development. The low-wage economy and Southern stagnation would end only after massive federal intervention. ■

**Bill Farrell** is a New York area-based freelance writer whose work has appeared in *The Nation*, among other publications.



# Castaways adrift in the modern world

**Foe**  
By J.M. Coetzee  
Viking, 157 pp., \$15.95

By Paul Skenazy

**S**OUTH AFRICAN NOVELIST J.M. Coetzee has made his mark with a dense, compact form of tale-telling. His earlier novels like *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Life and Times of Michael K* offer deceptively simple, moving chronicles—of a man asking too many questions about what the walls of his city keep out as well as protect him from, of a wayward soul trying to find some ground he might cultivate.

Each Coetzee novel is about origins: how cultural terrors, or love, or social taboos begin. The seemingly direct and accessible surface of the fictions belies parabolistic intentions. The pleasure of reading him includes risk: you feel like you've abandoned the world of predictable conclusions and consequences for a precarious red-zone where much is implied, little confirmed. The prose has the clarity of early morning, the suggestion of twilight.

*Foe* is perhaps his most extraordinary story yet—certainly his most complex and layered. It is a story about how stories get made, told, retold, confirmed into legends and preserved in our dreams and prejudices. Susan Barton is cast off of a ship, and drifts onto an island inhabited by a black man named Friday and an Englishman named Robinson Crusoe. She lives with them for a year, struggling to adapt herself to Crusoe's silence, indifference and stoic self-possession.

The inscrutable Crusoe listens patiently to the story of her failed effort of more than two years to find a long-lost daughter in Bahia (in South America), yet he remains taciturn about his own life. He scoffs at her hope that he is keeping a journal of his impressions and experiences. He tells her briefly how Friday had his tongue cut out and so is mute. Crusoe spends most of his days clearing land and producing a series of terraces, though he has no seeds to plant. ("Clearing ground and piling stones is little enough, but it is better than sitting in idleness.") He stares meditatively out to the empty water that surrounds them.

**White petals on the water:** Susan nurses him through an illness, watches Friday perform a curious ritual of throwing white petals on the ocean water, grows tired of the tedious regularity of island life, longs for rescue. A ship appears and she forces Crusoe onto the vessel, helps the sailors catch the frightened Friday and sets off with them to England and civilization. When Crusoe dies on the return journey, Susan adopts Friday, hop-

ing to make enough profit from the publication of a story of her island life to be able to send him back to Africa and independence. She hires one Mr. Foe, an "author who had heard many confessions and [was] reputed a very secret man" to convert her rambling, unsequential reminiscences into a salable, readable, "true" account that might at once "save" and immortalize Crusoe, Friday and Susan herself.

*Foe* is a contemporary variation on a classical Western tale often referred to as the first English novel—Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719 and based on the experiences of Alexander Selkirk. Unlike Coetzee's Crusoe, Defoe's Crusoe lived to tell his tale and gain some fame from its publication—it was Friday who died in transit, thus easing his white island master of the problem of finding a just yet "civilized" reward for his loyal black helpmate (and slave).

As Jean Rhys did by providing new perspective on the characters from *Jane Eyre* in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Coetzee has created an alternate version—actually a series of possible versions—of fictional history, retelling a European story from the underprivileged, Third-World point of view. Adopting Susan Barton's voice, he has revised—re-viewed—the island experience as a tale of abandonment, adaptation, colonial adventure and geographical discovery. Coetzee has developed a profound meditation not only on the incidents but on their subsequent life as heroic legend. His novel is about reading an old story: about what happens when a South African, writing in an English tradition, tries to reconcile the European fictions of his growing with the life that daily surrounds him.

Coetzee is not simply interested in replacing Defoe's fictional account with his own, however. He wants to ask about the advantages, and consequences, of how any of us, whatever our cultures, eras or fixations, explains, talks or writes about the world. Defoe's tale of a practical hero able to civilize, and capitalize on, the most remote of places is transformed into a picture of a man living in a curious truce with time, society and his own temperament and a woman overcome by her effort to give form to her island year.

Part I of Coetzee's book is Susan's supposedly awkward rendition of incidents that she writes out for Foe. Parts II, III and IV approach the material again, but in different ways. First we get a series of letters from Susan to Foe as she suffers through poverty in England. She tells us not only about her realization of the disharmony between her memories and her prose, but about

how she chases after the beleaguered Foe (who is hiding from the law), lives in his abandoned home, sells his books off to feed herself and Friday, watches as Friday dons Foe's legal robes and loses himself in a hypnotic dance, travels through the countryside with her black slave.

**Here come de Foe:** In Part III she meets Foe and the two talk about what will and won't serve as an adequate and satisfying book for the public. Foe is eager to hear

growing sense of entrapment: "All my life grows to be a story and there is nothing of my own left to me." Behind and a part of it all is Friday, at once protected and enslaved by Susan, a man denied tongue and unlettered, his own story perpetually interpreted for him and imposed on him by others: "As long as he is dumb we can tell ourselves his desires are dark to us, and continue to use him as we wish."

Coetzee's intensity in his telling all these tangled tales undermines the idea that there is anything sanctified or even sane about our civilized ways or ordering or recording the past. The fact that Defoe was born Daniel Foe provides Coetzee with a title that is at once objective and symbolic, suggesting the oppositional nature of cultures, genders, personalities and experiences (and of language and life).

**Parody and literacy and power:** The novel's multiple implications spark in wondrous ways. It is impossible not to read the book as a commentary on Coetzee's South African homeland; fatal to try to pigeonhole it in any such platitudinous way. It is a bold imaginative rethinking of our deserted island myth and Eden myth and also a clever reinterpretation of 18th-century England (the syntax

## FICTION

more about Susan's life in Bahia, while she adamantly insists that her tale is of the island only: "I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire." The two play at sexual as well as conversational intercourse. Foe urges Susan to revelations by telling her of a woman's desperate prison confession ("There comes a time when we must give reckoning of ourselves to the world"); she challenges his interpretation ("He has the last word who disposes of the greatest force"). Finally, a brief, dreamlike meditation by something like a 1980s author ends the novel on a haunting, if puzzling, note.

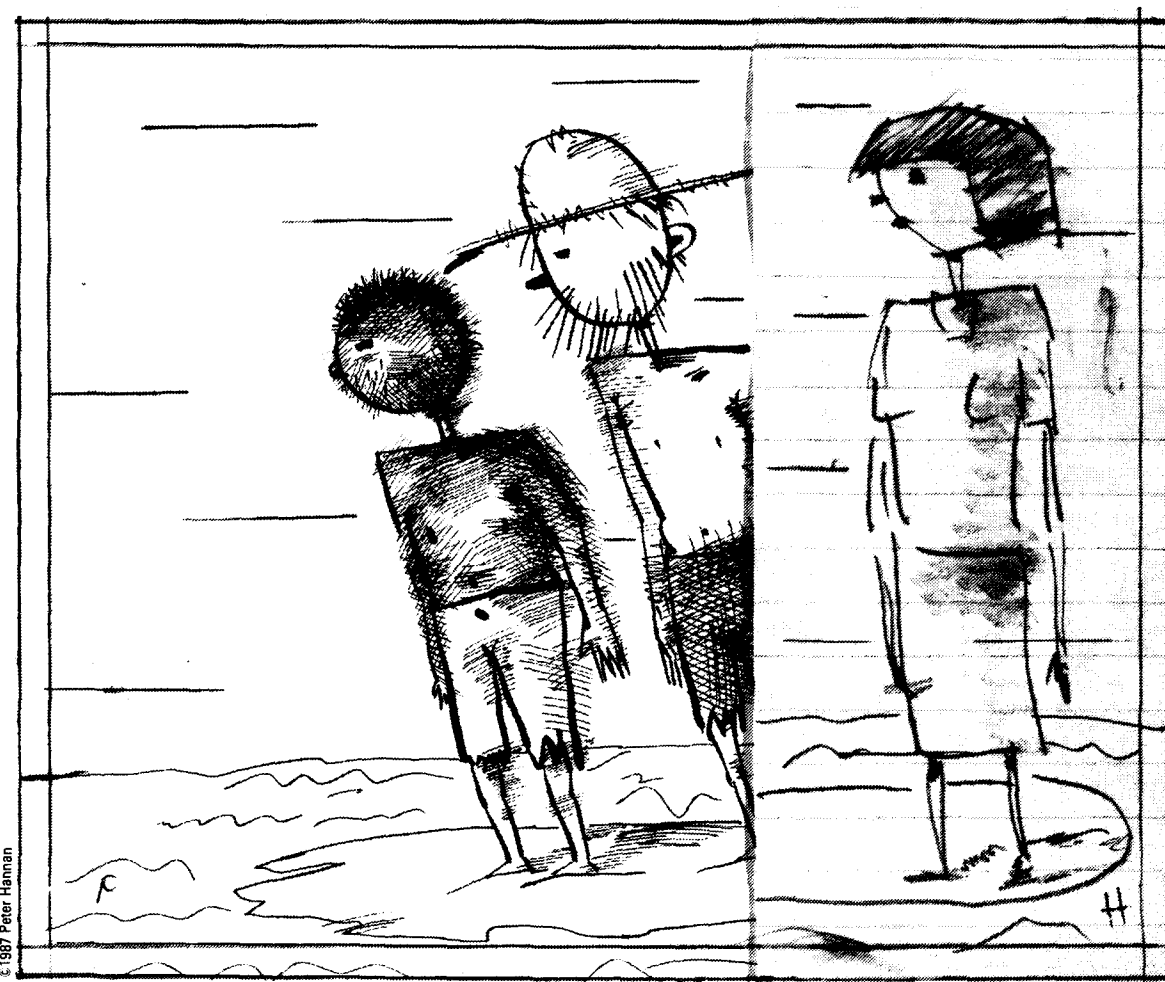
Susan struggles against her own

**Foe is a great novel that manages to balance speculation and action, philosophy and character, political concern and moral caution. But always the suggestiveness transcends any potentially simple allegory.**

of the time is beautifully rendered). It is a cunning parody of, challenge to and application of current critical ideas about the relationship between authority and authorship, literacy and power. It is an unpredictable and undocinaire study of colonialism, ethnocentrism, slavery and even of the "good intentions" of the well-meaning but confused whites seeking so-called liberation. It is a discourse on the nature of freedoms: social, mental, personal, literary.

Mostly, *Foe* is a great novel that manages to balance speculation and action, philosophy and character, political concern and moral caution. From the opening page when Susan's hair floats about her "like an anemone, like a jellyfish," to the closing vision of Friday at a desk writing row on row of "o's" across a piece of paper (is it a letter, a number, a circle, a shape?), you are engaged by event, image and idea, impressed by the wise and often aphoristic prose, driven to grasp the fleeting impressions and turn them into some coherent meaning. But always the suggestiveness transcends any potentially simple allegory: "Alas, my stories seem always to have more applications than I intend," Susan exclaims at one point. As you read, you, too, become entrapped in the act of story-making by your intense and passionate devotion to Susan's confusions, blindnesses and animated brilliance. Like Coetzee, you find yourself imagining ways to give significance to her ramblings and substance to her adventures, to make more of her isolated, islanded, time. You find yourself, in short, trying to retell—and so reclaim—your inheritance and hence your own experience. ■

Paul Skenazy teaches literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and reviews fiction for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.







Sebastian Rodriguez' Funeral of a Miner Killed in an Accident: mourners surround the company-loaned coffin amid a desolate Andean landscape.

was the resident photographer of this bleak and isolated Andean mining town from 1928 until his death in 1968, and Fran Antmann, a documentary photographer and social historian who spent two years in Morococha recovering the remnants of Rodriguez' work, some 200 glass plates and negatives and some prints and postcards.

When Antmann arrived at the door of Rodriguez' daughter, a poor seamstress in the town of Huanayo, in 1979, and announced that she was writing a history of Rodriguez, she was met with surprise, as though he "had been a shoe-maker and I had wanted to commemorate his work." In fact, Antmann had begun a project that is exemplary in its cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural ramifications.

Living in Morococha, taking her own photographs as she sought out Rodriguez' family and subjects, learning the rhythms of daily life and ritual in the mining town and in the village homes of the miners, she entered into an almost mystical partnership with her predecessor. The MoCHA show combines the two bodies of work, offering an extraordinary contrast between cultures, times and styles, and simultaneously an extraordinary synthesis based on respect, or love, for the people of Morococha, immortalized against all odds.

The stark "realism" of Antmann's photographs of Morococha is overtaken by the tragic beauty of the lives being lived there—inevitably "romantic" to outsiders, but no less meaningful. Despite the casual tone of modern documentary photography, the intimacy of a woman photographing daily lives in other women's homes and the compassion evoked by observing suffering without being able to obliterate it, Antmann's work also contains an element of that monumental drama that pervades Rodriguez' formal portraits.

He pictured people as they came to his studio and posed themselves against an Alpine backdrop painted by his brother from a candy box. He also took the mining company's identification photos, photographed groups of workers and managers as well as funerals, weddings, festivals and such events as the arrival of a hydroplane on the Morococha lagoon or the arrest of a pathetic old rapist, pictured with his bewildered child victim—a strange and curiously moving social document.

Rodriguez came to Morococha in his 30s after training with one of Lima's most fashionable portraitists, then becoming a poor itinerant photographer in the Andean mining region. When Rodriguez arrived in Morococha in the 1920s it was a boom town, boasting even a socialist bookstore. From the 17th century, Indian men had been recruited (and shanghaied) to work

## Tunneling to artistic enlightenment

By Lucy R. Lippard

A STAGGERING NUMBER OF "invisible" faces have become visible since the invention of photography, recording the existence of those previously deemed socially undeserving of record. In Third World countries, it was well into the 20th century before working people's desires and ways of seeing and being seen began to be felt through local portrait photography, as well as through the sympathetic, if foreign, eyes of documentary photographers. Two recent art events—an exhibition and a public work—offer two very different views of this phenomenon: "The Mining Town of Morococha" at the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art (MoCHA) in New York and Alfredo Jaar's takeover of a nearby subway station.

Each of these art works is characterized by the direct and solemn gaze of the "other"—the indigenous rural peoples of Latin America. From these walls the black, unblinking eyes confront us from another world that also seems like another time, echoing the ambiguous and anachronistic uses of time and space that characterize much of Latin America's unique literature. Because the images these visual artists present are "still," they have more impact than those

that flash by in newspapers or television—similar faces caught up in some disaster or other, transformed into alien victims rather than revealed as our cohabitants in this hemisphere.

**Subway to hell:** Alfredo Jaar is a Chilean exile living in New York. His large, monochromatically tinted photographs of Brazilian gold miners working in the eastern Amazon region invaded the advertising space of New York City's Spring Street subway station for over a month. It was an eerie experience, going down into the bowels of the urban earth to be confronted by these striking images of primitive industry—as though photos had somehow been taken when slaves were building the pyramids. Hundreds of nearly naked men swarm painfully up the paths and handmade ladders of a great open, rock-faceted pit, carrying huge sacks of

mud by bands around their foreheads, stripping the earth away from veins of gold.

Many of the photographs are half-confrontational, half-intimate.

### PHOTOGRAPHY

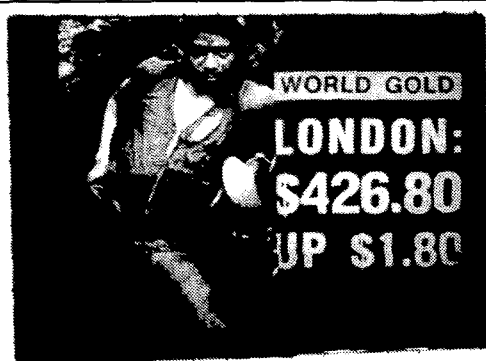
They are action shots of very hard work. Sometimes only straining arms and legs are seen, or the weighty bags of mud, but most often the handsome, open faces of the young workers grin out at us, incomprehensibly cheerful, since they are living away from their families and being paid on a piece-work basis that is hardly lucrative. Ironically, this labor-intensive exploitation is part of a government plan to allay the unemployment that comes with highly mechanized modern mining. It can also be seen as yet another "gift" from the Third World to the post-industrialized

First World that holds and pulls the purse strings of Latin America.

None of this information is available to the casual subway rider, nor is the artist's name or the work's title (*Rushes*) anywhere to be found. The only clue that this is not a strictly surrealist exercise in juxtaposition of unlike realities comes from an occasional panel that lists world gold prices in bold white-on-red print. The nature of "value" is therefore subtly reflected, perhaps a bit too subtly for a public artwork, though it is difficult to escape the impact of those faces, those laboring limbs.

Eventually the inevitable graffiti appeared on some of the photos: "Felicitaciones! Soy Chileno, lo estos haciendo bien"; "Beats the hell out of postmodernism"; "Pointless, just another Keith Haring"; and, repellently, "These are photos of an AIDS farm." *Rushes* is part of a series of installation works in and out of museums and galleries that Jaar calls "Gold in the Morning." Gold has long been an alchemical symbol of transformation, and the question raised here is an important one: is the earth, or its gold, or its people more precious?

**Mining the Peruvian vein:** The human toll of international greed is also a subtext in the Morococha show, which is a unique pairing of two photographers—Sebastian Rodriguez, a provincial Peruvian who



Underground art in a New York subway by Alfredo Jaar



the mines, first for Spanish colonialists and then for North American corporations. (The Cerro de Pasco Corporation in Morococha was backed by Morgans and Vanderbilts.)

Their traditional farming villages, though most of the rich land had been stolen from them, remained home—where their families lived, where the road led, before or after death. They brought their local culture with them and found little to replace it in Morococha, where the Yankee managers lived in a fortified enclave that included a country club complete with golf course. In 1928, a mine disaster led to a workers' insurrection and consequent massacre. The union's triumph was shortlived and organizing didn't begin again until the '40s.

Rodriguez didn't picture the labor struggles, but his photo-

graphs clearly delineated the social hierarchies, documenting the reluctant transformation of peasants into workers, an emergent class identity forced upon ancient traditions. Thus the photographer's work provided a unique link between ancient and modern, cultural and social issues. Rodriguez, raised nearby, but initially a stranger to the clashing cultures of Morococha, knew and understood both the continuity and the change.

**Cultural transmission:** The heart of Antmann's research and her own moving photographs of a barely changed Morococha a decade after Rodriguez' death is not the obvious economic tragedy, but the role of the photographer as "cultural transmitter." As A.D. Coleman points out in MoCHA's excellent catalogue, both she and Rodriguez based their work in "storytelling...in the most ancient, pro-

found and moral sense of that task." Rodriguez in particular was an eye and a lens standing on a ridge between traditional and modern—between the enduring values of indigenous Latin America and their vulnerability to the battering ram of a callous, imported and dominant culture.

"In Morococha," writes Antmann, "the camera was converted to an indigenous art form.... The public for whom Rodriguez' photographs were created were the same men and women whose very lives were themselves embodied in the works." She reports that while her camera was welcome in the most intimate moments, such as funerals, her women friends saw no reason to be photographed during their daily chores. Photography as a new ritual, a record replacing old rituals, was a culturally appropriate presence when it marked signifi-

cant time and made life bearable but it was a "needless formality" at laundry or stove.

In her doctoral dissertation for New York University, Antmann demonstrates the ways Rodriguez reflected both European-imposed social life and the ancient Andean world view. With sensitivity and compassion, she analyzes a stunning Rodriguez image, *Funeral of a Miner Killed in an Accident*. Mourners gather in a half circle around the corpse, laid out on a stretcher next to the elegant company-loaned coffin, while behind them stretches the desolate landscape, streams leading to the lake, the road out of town leading "home." The water provides a cosmic symbol, traditionally pictures on *mates*, or carved gourds, as a river connecting and unifying different scenes, or life and death. The curves of the hills and waters are reflected in the circle of

people, photographed from a slightly higher vantage point so that they look sadly upward, as though following the soul on its voyage.

Fran Antmann is now raising money for copy negatives and for a Rodriguez study center in Lima. She has returned to Peru to continue researching historical Andean photography. She has not only tapped a rich aesthetic vein for her own life work but, as Coleman remarks, she has done "a service to the people of Peru, returning to them a vital but imperiled segment of their own cultural history." Sebastian Rodriguez would probably be as amazed as his daughter to find that he, and Morococha, had acquired a posthumous gringa collaborator and, in the process, a certain immortality. ■

Lucy R. Lippard is a New York-based art critic and frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

**Ballot Result**  
By Minutemen  
SST Records  
**Ragin' Full-On**  
By FIREHOSE  
SST Records

By John Dougan

IN EARLY 1980, DENNES DALE BOON (known simply as d. Boon), along with lifelong friends Mike Watt and George Hurley, sick of woodshedding in their hometown of San Pedro, Calif., and watching the style slaves that passed for punks on MTV, decided the time was right to create their own distinctive din. Fueled by the abrasive, polemical clang'n'roll of English post-punk (Pop Group, Wire, The Fall) and the sound of a decade-plus spent listening to AOR radio (Blue Oyster Cult, Steely Dan, Aerosmith, Van Halen), they added the hardcore edge that was redefining punk sensibilities.

After a brief stint as the Reactionaries, they renamed themselves the Minutemen (because of their penchant for writing very brief songs) and spat out their epigrammatic seven-song debut EP *Paranoid Time*. An explosive, confrontational record from its titles ("Sickles and Hammers," "Joe McCarthy's Ghost," "Fascists") to its machine-gun sonic assault of barbed-wire guitar, funkified bass and throaty, bellowing (mostly Boon) vocals. This was a revolution you could dance to.

The promise of *Paranoid Time* quickly became an avalanche of 11 releases (including one cassette-only anthology) over the next five years, each one—due in large part to Boon—more politically astute than its predecessor. The *de rigueur* fuck-you-isms of punk metamorphosed into diatribes explicitly critical of U.S. intervention in Central America. Scared and angered by what they saw as rampant militarism spurred on by the cheery, empty-headed jingoism that emanated from the White House, Boon, Watt and Hurley fur-



FIREHOSE: (l. to r.) George Hurley, Ed FROMOHIO, Mike Watt

## MUSIC

### Minutemen follow-ups on the firing line

ously wrote and recorded their finest material: the two-record, 48-song mega-wail *Double Nickels on the Dime*, the stunning *Project: Mersh* EP ("mersh" being Pedro slang for commercial) and their final and perhaps best studio effort, *Three Way Tie (for Last)*. By combining breathtaking musicianship, caustic lyrical fusillades inspired by the Beat Generation and the erect-middle-finger arrogance of the Blank Generation, they became the most impassioned spokesmen of sociopolitical activism to emerge from the sinewy chaos of hardcore.

**Death in the boondocks:** Then, ironically on the heels of *Three Way Tie*'s critical and commercial success, it all got shot to hell. Fate—here taking the form of a broken rear van axle—intervened and snuffed out (at 28) d. Boon's life somewhere on an Arizona highway the week of Christmas 1985.

Enter 22-year-old Ed Crawford, bored Ohio State student and sometime folk guitarist who a year earlier had wandered into a Minutemen gig and became transfixed by the corpulent Boon's manic riffing, drunken rhino lurch and the furious by-play of Watt and Hurley. Sufficently impressed, he purchased an electric guitar, a bunch of Minutemen albums and went to work learning their songs. Little did he realize he'd be the catalyst in a near miraculous resuscitation.

Not long after Boon's death, a friend of Crawford's—the bassist from Camper Van Beethoven—erroneously informed him that Watt was auditioning new guitarists. Truth was, Watt was noled up in his home seriously considering giving up music. Crawford made repeated phone calls and, despite Watt's obvious disinterest, flew to San Pedro. After a series of jams something clicked and Crawford,

despite having never written a song or been in a band, left school, changed his surname to FROMOHIO and, along with Watt and Hurley, became FIREHOSE.

Crawford's lack of experience in no way mars their excellent debut; in fact, he exhibits a great deal of assuredness for such a young pup. Although more traditional in its orientation—i.e., a greater use of standard verse-chorus-verse structures, songwriting symmetry the Minutemen generally eschewed—it's still a muscular, dense and daring record. While its rage is not specifically confined to Central America, and Crawford doesn't have the foundation-shaking larynx power of Boon (actually his voice is downright pretty), there is still a seething, angry undercurrent.

From the implicit anti-Reaganisms of "Brave Captain" and "Another Theory Shot to Shit," to the less political, but no less urgent, "Relating Dudes to Jazz" and "Perfect Pairs," this is a record that speaks with greater confidence and clarity on each spin. Admittedly, diehards may need a little extra time to fully accept and absorb the heavy folkie baggage that Crawford brings. His poignant "This..." for example, could have been written by John Prine—but there's plenty of proof here that FIREHOSE will continue to produce heady, heartfelt, challenging rock'n'roll.

**Democracy in action:** Released a few months later, the Minutemen's posthumous finale, *Ballot Result*, is a truncated version of what was to be a triple LP opus entitled *Three Dudes/Six Sides/Three Studio/Three Live*. The 32 tracks comprising the live sides are the first, to my knowledge, to be democratically chosen by fan vote. Although the project could never be fully realized, some ballots (included in copies of *Three Way Tie*) were mailed in, counted and songs selected. Culled in part from two '85 radio concerts and various studio outtakes, it's a fierce, sad document. And while *Ballot Result* reinforces the band's importance,

it also offers more evidence that Boon was hitting his creative peak when he died.

While the voting results may cause some dissension within the ranks of the faithful, there really isn't a helluva lot to whine about—especially in the cover department. Half the fun of a Minutemen gig was guessing what chunks of history they'd rampage through. Here the choices are prime: the Urinals' proto-punk screech "Ack, Ack, Ack," Richard Hell's "Time," Roky Erickson's bit of Texas psychocandy "Bermuda" and the faster 'n' louder grunge blur of Steppenwolf's "Hey, Lawdy Mama."

Despite the band's tendency to play it fast and loose with the past, they revered their influences (be it Blue Oyster Cult's Eric Bloom or John Fogerty's Creedence years) and treasured those bits of wax-encased inspiration that compelled them to be creative on their own terms, something they effectively articulate here on the state-of-the-band address, "History Lesson Part 2." And nowhere is that sense of gratitude more acute than on the record's penultimate number, a proud, stirring version of Sambia's anti-imperialist broadside, "No! No! No! to Draft and War." An us-versus-them invective that demands peace for El Salvador, Boon's determined (and more tuneful than usual) vocal, quietly supported by his understated guitar, is a compelling, moving tribute that avoids sounding overly didactic, tendentious or dull. Not only does it succeed as the LP's climactic moment, but also serves as a perfect way to remember Boon—as the quintessential punk.

Playing these two records back-to-back will leave you struggling with feelings of loss and hope. I still miss Boon, and with the sordid ramifications of Irangate coming to the fore it's a shame he's not here to write about it. Still, I can live with this emotional dichotomy, because it's times like these when being caught between the power of the past and the promise of the future ain't such a bad place to be. ■



## Is Margaret Randall a threat to the U.S.A.?

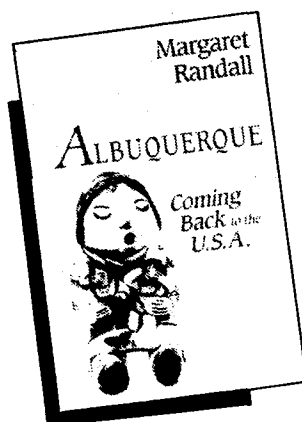


In 1984, poet, political writer and feminist Margaret Randall returned to the U.S., the country of her birth, after living for nearly a quarter century in Latin America. Her application for permanent residency has been denied by the Immigration & Naturalization Service, who claim that her political beliefs make her a threat to the state.

## Alice Walker, Kurt Vonnegut & Studs Terkel don't think so

Margaret Randall, the author of more than forty books, including the bestselling *Sandino's Daughters*, is currently appealing the INS decision against her. Alice Walker, Kurt Vonnegut and Studs Terkel join a growing number of writers, artists and activists who are organizing to help Randall fight this unjust ruling.

## Albuquerque Coming Back to the U.S.A.



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Adrienne Rich has this to say about Margaret Randall's latest book:

"Albuquerque is really about the U.S.A., 1984, as filtered through the eyes and soul of a North American-born woman returning home after twenty-three years in Latin America. Margaret Randall's journals and photographs provide a remarkably rich and probing document of this time and place, a witness to the plurality of its cultural and political currents, to the lives of many individuals both searching and committed. At once a book of homecoming and travel, this is a unique testimony."



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## Shuffle

Continued from page 24

offer of a jive role; at auditions, Bobby's fellow-actors Mau-Mau him with talk of dignity, then hustle off to lick the director's boots. And then they show up at the NAACP picket line.

The problems that Bobby Taylor faces don't arise merely because he's black. The range of options open in mainstream movies for any actor are pretty narrow. As the skits show, the talented Mr. Townsend can play Superman or Rambo as well as a white man, but he's still playing plastic stereotypes.

But mass-produced myths are important to a movie-addicted American public—as we see in "Sneakin' in the Movies," a vicious take-off on shows like *Sneak Previews* and *At the Movies* with Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert. Two "homeboys" (Townsend and Jimmy Woodard) tell you their picks of a week of sneaking into theaters. They want to know: Can you pronounce the movie title? (*Amadeus Meets Salieri* fails to meet the criterion, since Townsend can't pronounce "Salieri.") Is an adventure fantasy like "Chicago Jones and the Temple of Doom" "realistic"?

Best of all, they love a sleazo horror film, a *Night of the Living Dead* takeoff called *Attack of the Street Pimps*. Sure, the pseudo-clip of *Street Pimps* is raw, but it's riotously vulgar in the way that American movies can package vitality (and that Pauline Kael made it socially acceptable to like, back in the '60s).

This skit reminds you of how tediously bland the two-white-men-sitting-in-a-movie-theater format is, how pretentious is its fiction to represent the "average viewer." It also tells you how important mass entertainment movies, with their cheap thrills and tacky games and silly myths, are to us. More importantly, it shows how vital our own reactions to them are—all of us, homeboys and yuppies and post office workers.

**Black comedy:** *Hollywood Shuffle* is a pungent example of the energy in black comedy today, energy that feeds directly from the realities of racism and its attendant

themes of stereotyping and struggle over the vocabulary of cultural pride. It's been on screen in *She's Gotta Have It*, in theater in *The Colored Museum* and in stand-up comedy. Someone like standup comedienne Phyllis Yvonne Stickney, with routines like "All My Chitlins," carries on in a tradition that Whoopi Goldberg and Eddie Murphy have been derailed from in their voyages into the mainstream.

*Hollywood Shuffle* tests the limits of that socially-conscious comedic trend. Its humor is not like that of a Richard Pryor, who succeeds best at the edge of profound discomfort, at the edge of the abyss between white and black culture in this country. Instead, its daring is in drawing you into the joke as seen from the black side of the abyss. (If you don't laugh at the portrayal of the white casting director, seen in ghastly close-up from the actor's viewpoint, check your pulse.)

But the film, making its pitch for a black presence in Hollywood, also makes you wonder where we go from here. Because in *Hollywood Shuffle*, Townsend has not only poked Hollywood in the ribs, but asked it for a job. He's making an argument for the kind of movie industry that wouldn't depend on blockbusters that seem just as pleasantly distant to each member of any American community, that wouldn't take a Whoopi Goldberg and turn her into a cultureless freak in *Burglar*. The Samuel Goldwyn Company is cleaning up on Townsend's daring. Will major studios see dollar signs in those assumptions?

While we're waiting to find out, we can watch the development of black independent film, which has blossomed in the last few years, with neorealist features like Charles Burnett's *My Brother's Wedding* and Billy Woodberry's *Bless Their Little Hearts* and much promising short-film work by black women filmmakers. If black culture is to have a presence on the wide screen, it will depend not only on education of mass audiences and white producers about the world beyond cheap stereotypes, but also on the evolution of a filmic language that offers alternatives to both the Rambos and the Sambos. ■

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## Homeless

Continued from page 13

During his first term the governor used the threat of his veto to compel the legislature to reduce social service spending. And in his recent campaign he rode into office promising to "scrub" an already austere budget. Texas' governor is a self-made multimillionaire who hired out as an oilfield worker in South Texas 50 years ago and today owns controlling interest in Sedco, the world's largest offshore drilling company.

But it's unlikely that even during the hardest of his roughneck years Clements ever slept in anything quite like the Austin City Shelter, where 300 men sometimes compete for 180 mats lined up on a concrete floor. The shelter is an abandoned meat-packing plant with no running water and outdoor portable toilets.

Most of Austin's homeless men sleep within a mile of the mansion where the governor will sleep for four years. In cars, in dumpsters, in the city shelter, under bridges along Town Lake, at dawn they line up at the intersection of Second and Neches streets, hoping to be picked up for a day's work.

And they will continue to line up each morning during the final 60 days of the current legislative session while the governor presides over the "scrubbing of the budget." Eighty-two million was cut from the state's human services budget in two special fiscal sessions last summer. The governor insists that he will veto anything that does not include sufficient reductions in spending to help close the state's \$5.4 billion revenue gap. The governor's budget, if passed, will mean a 17 percent reduction in social service spending. Legislators and lobbyists are beginning to argue that this budget will not pass.

But the homeless aren't at the top of the political agenda of anyone who might make a difference. And the little new money appropriated will probably go toward bringing the state's prison system into compliance with a federal court order to provide more space.

Less regressive states may see something of their future in Texas—a state where social services are almost completely privatized. Yet help for the homeless might be one issue on which the public is way ahead of elected officials. A *Dallas Morning News* poll found that 52 percent of those sampled responded that they would pay more taxes to assist the homeless. And University of Houston pollster Murray has discovered a softening of anti-tax resolve among middle-class Houston residents.

"The public seems cross-pressured on the question of taxation and social services, but there seems to be a greater sensitivity toward people in those situations," Murray said. "After such a prolonged economic downturn people are moving away from the traditional Houston mentality that anyone can get a job."

It's unlikely that the governor will be moved, however. In an earlier campaign he said, "A lot of these people are going to have to realize that they've got to be mobile. They're going to have to realize that they've got to go where the jobs are. I started that kind of *modus operandi* when I was 17 years old and getting out of Highland Park High School. I didn't sit up there in Dallas sucking my thumb. I got on a bus and went to South Texas."

Louis DuBose is associate editor of the *Texas Observer*.

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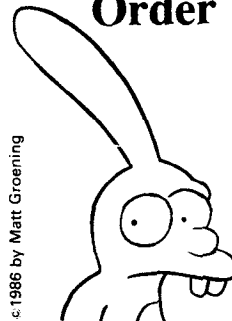
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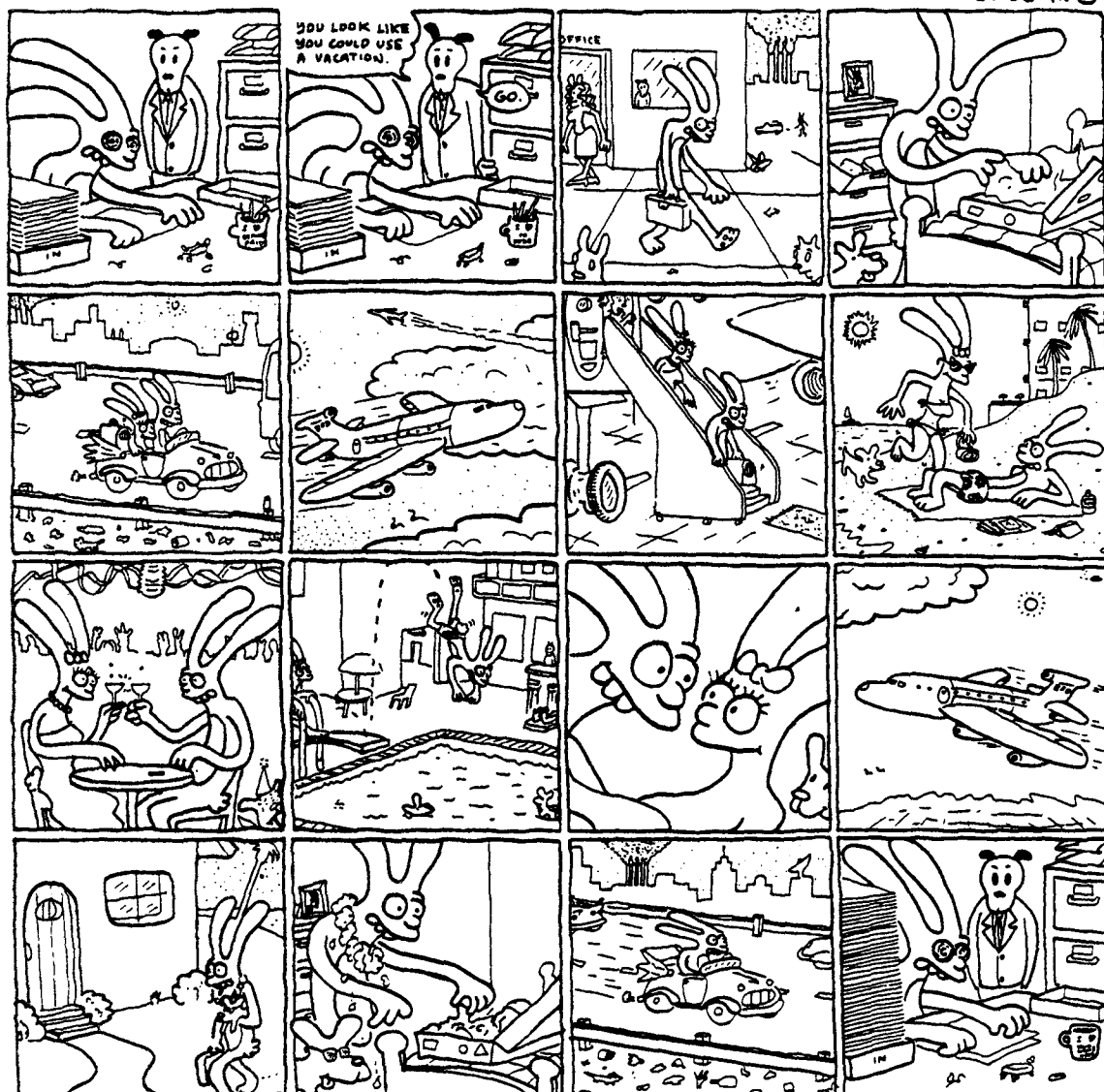
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# Black out comedy

Photos by Paul Slaughter  
and Nathaniel Bellamy

## Hollywood Shuffle

Directed by Robert Townsend

By Pat Aufderheide

**F**INALLY, A MOVIE COMEDY WITH BITE. AND OF course it's independent. But it's got a curious perch overlooking the Hollywood hills.

*Hollywood Shuffle*, by sometime-Hollywood actor and would-be director Robert Townsend (seen in supporting roles in *Soldier's Story*, *Streets of Fire*, *American Flyers*) is a hilarious sendup of black stereotypes in film, grounded in an understanding of the pervasive racism that underlies it. As if that weren't enough, it's also an investigation of the limits of mass entertainment as purveyor of American culture.

The film is not shy to point out its moral, made in an epilogue song about taking control of image-making that's about you. The more powerful message, though, is the one you can hear behind the speech an NAACP leader delivers as he censures Our Hero for accepting a demeaning role: "They won't play the Rambos until they stop playing the Sambos."

What a choice.

The film shows you that choice, too, with a spoofy pseudo-trailer for the new blockbuster called, of course, *Rambro*.

*Hollywood Shuffle* is like that all the way through: punchy plays on the contradictions of mass culture. Townsend, the producer, director and co-scripter (with Keenen Ivory Wayans), knows them intimately. He's been as successful as you get as a black actor in the movie business without being Eddie Murphy, which is, basically, occasional work. He wanted to make it big, not as an Eddie Murphy clone but in control—say, as a director. (Not that he has anything against Murphy; in fact, he just directed a comedy concert film for him.) So he applied personal savings and charge cards to making a series of short film-skits to demonstrate his own multiple talents.

With a few added characters, the skits eventually added up to a feature: *Hollywood Shuffle*. It's the story of aspiring actor Bobby Taylor (Townsend, of course), whose boss at the Winky Dinky Dog fast food stand has put him on probation, whose grandma wants him to get a good job at the post office and who still keeps auditioning hopefully for roles in films like *Jive Time Jimmy's Revenge*. The skits loosely drop into this clothesline of a plot as daydreams, movie trailers and TV programs and ads.

Whenever they come, they're welcome

Robert  
Townsend's  
*Hollywood Shuffle*  
is anything but  
the same old song  
and dance.

satirical nuggets. Take the TV ad, "Black Acting School," in which white instructors teach blacks to talk jive, shuffle and perform as "epic slaves." Or the sitcom "There's a Bat in My House," in which a black bat comes to live with a white family.

Not a minute of screen time goes by without a savagely funny joke on the terms of pop culture. The weenie-hats that the hot-dog stand employees wear, for instance, are trash-culture gems. During a nightmarish daydream in which the NAACP pickets his house for accepting the lead in *Jive Time Jimmy's Revenge*, Bobby's grandma (Helen

Martin) tells reporters she's saving her story for a book, to be called *Bobby Dearest*. Bobby asks Batty Boy (Brad Sanders) how to tell if your role is a good one. "Does your character die? No? Then it's a good role," the supercilious superstar says.

**Talent on parade:** Townsend's as convincing a lead in the Sam Spade-like TV episode called "Death of a Breakdancer" (his enemy is called Jheri-curl and the weapon of course is hair activator) as he is a responsible older brother in a working-class family. And his ingenuity, wit and simple competence as producer-director is as snappy a

calling card as you could ask for. The film is a casting-director's delight, packed as it is with lively performances by a range of mostly-black actors, most of whom we've never seen before.

But the film goes far beyond showcasing talent. Townsend has made a film that shows how little the big screen shows of any American community, and also how we depend on it, sometimes for dreams and sometimes for simple release. It both asserts the autonomous existence of a black subculture and its participation in mass culture.

With Bobby Taylor at home, you get a glimpse of a black working-class culture where kids go to school, nobody talks in jive and people aspire to a regular income. (If the potshots taken in those scenes at gays are any guide, however, it's also a culture that's unself-consciously homophobic.) One of the most touching skits in the film is a public service announcement Bobby Taylor does for postal work as a job with community respect.

When Bobby goes to audition, you see the conflicts built into any black actor's aspirations. Watching Shakespearean-trained actors memorize and deliver lines of black jive, or Taylor's schoolboy brother coaching him in black English from a script, or a clutch of actors in all shapes and sizes do Eddie Murphy imitations, makes for the kind of comedy where you could laugh till you cry. Pride goeth before and after, but not during the

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